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Political discourse in exile : Karl Marx and the Jewish question of our times.

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POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN EXILE:
KARL MARX AND THE JEWISH QUESTION
OF OUR TIMES

A Dissertation Presented

by

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ABSTRACT

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Karl Marx's philosophy of writing demands his readers help develop his theory by questioning its gaps and contradictions. A crucial question concerns Marx's relation to his Jewishness.

In "On the Jewish Question," Judaism stands for civil society and the transformative power of practical need, Christianity for the "political state" and spiritual solutions to material problems. Human emancipation will spring not from politics but "the negation of Judaism": recognizing and overcoming barriers to fully human existence.

Marx thus endorses a "Jewish" viewpoint which senses reality as the Hebrew bible does. The Torah conceives human beings in dialogue with God as indispensible partners in creating the world. We are called to act; our action matters. Marx criticizes the Greeks and most Western philosophers for their static, contemplative view

of reality. Any ontology which imposes a truth beyond social relations privileges some people and needs, excluding others. By rejecting God, Marx discredits the God's-eye view that leads to false universals. He retains the structure of dialogue between the species and its evolving needs.

Hegel had offered the young Marx a dialectical approach to reality, but Marx eventually found Hegel's ontology too Greek. Rather than simply reversing Hegel, though, Marx corrects him as though he were subject to a Jewish worldview. Marx's method resembles the traditional Jewish style of hermeneutics called midrash. It performs the same function: restoring sense to a chaotic world as glimpsed from a particular tradition.

The breakdown of social meaning is central to Marx's theory of alienation. The Jewish theme of exile explains Marx's urgency. A group is exiled when society constructs reality to preclude it from expressing or acting upon the needs that constitute its identity. A society in exile frustrates the realization of human purposes. Both workers and capitalist society are exiled. To return, they must believe the world can become human--as their experience under capitalism shows it cannot.

Marx's personal exile is that his audience lacks the Jewish context to recognize his theory of how we become

free. Theorists continue his work by listening to people in exile and working out different roads to emancipation.

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INTRODUCTION

Suppose, playfully, as a kind of parlor game, one tried to answer the question, "What single phrase of Karl Marx's tells us most about his life and thought?" The reply for which I would hold out comes not from Capital, nor The Communist Manifesto, nor any of his work the public and scholars know best. I would point to a letter Marx wrote to his son-in-law Paul Lafargue in 1882, one year before he died. In that note, he gibes, "What is certain is that I am no Marxist."[1]

What did Marx mean by this extraordinary statement? Even before making itself understood, it displays the man's abiding love of paradox--his irresistible pull towards ironic formulations and his fascination with contradictory realities. Once in context, the remark speaks of another, perhaps less endearing trait: his biting sarcasm. For the "Marxists" he puts at a distance are his would-be disciples, the leaders of the workers' movement in France, whom he disowns because of their reformist and anarchist leanings. The old lion devours the young whelps. To a theorist who is also a revolutionary, his followers must be his most prized possessions, since only through their efforts can his goals be expressed in practice. Yet incredibly, one can

hear "the cutting disdain with which he pronounced the word bourgeois"[2] ringing through Marx's sneer at "Marxists." Granted that Marx never took political disagreements lightly. Although a doting father and a loving (if unfaithful) husband, over his ideological opponents he often sat as a grim and implacable judge, pursuing them relentlessly in polemic after polemic. Still, I would argue, Marx's declaration "I am no Marxist" is there to teach us something crucial about his theory and our relation to it.

Without relinquishing its immediate message, we could proceed nevertheless to read this remark very differently. If we chose, we could hear Marx repudiating with this statement, not only those particular interpreters, but all the copyists and critics who would try in later years to make "Marxism" into a system. His continual revisions are as much a part of Marx's writings as the texts themselves. "I find unsatisfactory a work written four weeks before and rewrite it completely," he observes. This is no mere quirk, no annoying personal tic: it is a philosophy of writing. "It is self-evident," he writes, "that an author, if he [sic] pursues his research, cannot publish literally what he has written six months previously."[3] The passage of time, Marx presumes, brings change and growth, to the writer if s/he is fortunate; to

the text, always. The meaning of what is written lies always in the future.

If we pursue this line of thought, we can read none of Marx's many books and essays as a finished work. Each refers to the next, to all the others, and to works he never lived to write or (perhaps) even to imagine. Just as he labored over Hegel, Feuerbach, and Ricardo, looking for questions that demanded to be asked and riddles crying out to be resolved, so, too, did Marx exploit his own work as a mother lode of gaps and contradictions awaiting further inquiry. Writing his work, Marx also read it; writing new texts, he read <u>through</u> and <u>beyond</u> old ones. Thus, Marx is no "Marxist." But those of his readers who codify his thinking, whether as votaries or heretics, are. And they have not learned all Marx has to teach.

An amusing piece of wordplay, but... is this any way to draw conclusions about Marx's theory? Even for the sentence in question, we have one perfectly sound explanation already: a political disagreement between Marx and the French socialists. Did he mean anything else by it? We have no obvious reason to think so. After all, it takes an enormous leap of the imagination to read one flippant comment as a theory in brief; besides, it requires setting the actual circumstances or context

of the remark to one side. Above all, even if Marx considers his work as open-ended, self-referential, meaningful totality, is he right to do so? Does any theorist have the right to set down the standard by which his or her own work shall be judged? Unless we treat Marx's theory as a set of positions taken, how can we come to terms with it at all?

These are serious questions indeed--perhaps, too serious. By any chance, might we entertain the possibility of ignoring them? I think there are good reasons for us willingly to suspend our disbelief in the validity of the reading we have pursued so far. For one, it is simply not true that we discovered Marx's philosophy of writing in the phrase "I am not a Marxist" alone. That would have been impossible. In order even to think of connecting them, we first had to become aware of Marx's work habits and publishing history and his way of approaching his own and other people's previous writings, and regard them as a problem. At the same time, we had to come to wonder what in the world "I am not a Marxist" means, coming from Marx. Only that initial noticing and wondering could move us to join the perplexing phrase to the odd theoretical attitude in order to search for their shared interpretation. We did not explain "I am not a Marxist" by a previously known theory, nor did we prove

the existence of the theory by the single citation. Instead, we groped about for a way into Marx's thinking that would let us make sense of both, together. Finding that way in, our next step should be to travel it back through the dense undergrowth of Marx's theory in general to see whether it can lead us to an understanding of that theory at least as clear and convincing as any other approach. There is nothing strange in this procedure: it is a variant of the famous hermeneutic circle, with the difference that we start by puzzling over what we do not understand about the text rather than clarifying what we do.[4]

Suppose we do go ahead and make the attempt to apply our tentative insight to the task of understanding Marx. Inevitably, at the same time we inquire, "Is this really how Marx conceived of what he was doing?", we will be asking and framing a definite opinion on the related question, "Was he right?" For if Marx can plausibly be thought to have intended to include future developments of his theory in the theory itself, then his intention <u>is</u> part of the theory. To disregard that intention (as distinct from disbelieving it) would be to commit a breach of faith. If we come to affirm that Marx did regard his work as stretching into the future, beyond the printed page, then we would have to treat that self-

definition as a kind of "performative utterance": i.e., it does what it says it does. When an authorized official says, "I now pronounce you man and wife," it makes no sense to ask if s/he is telling the truth.[5] Similarly, if Marx intends that we readers should get caught on the surface irregularities of his theory, not plane them down to a smooth superficiality, how can we legitimately do otherwise? To read Marx literally is to falsity him. In order to read him truly, we must lend him the use of our imaginations.

In his recent work on Marx's critique of culture, Louis Dupre urges a similar approach. He writes:

> But the lasting effectiveness of Marx's analysis invites us to an active dialogue. This distinguishes him from past figures whose impact has long been absorbed by our culture. Descartes steered modern thought in a new direction, but he has ceased to inspire cultural innovation. Marx's critique continues to challenge our attitudes today. He remains a living partner in the sociocultural discussion. But precisely on that ground he demands to be treated as a contemporary--that is, critically rather than deferentially.[6]

Certainly, this philosophy of writing we have ascribed to Marx grants an incomparable advantage to his social and political theory over against the more straitened formulations of other thinkers. By accepting it, we agree to "learn from" Karl Marx not only what he teaches us explicitly,[7] but anything we infer or invent to make sense of his teachings. In return, Marx becomes

extraordinarily vulnerable. On the same assumptions, he has no choice but to bend to any plausible construction with which we burden his theory. There are limits, of course, both to our license and to our debt, his obligation and his claim to respect. An argument can oppose Marx's logic instead of restoring it, clash with his themes, not harmonize with them. The burden of proof shifts--it falls on those who would narrow the orbit of Marx's teachings--but it is not done away with altogether. Still, the boundaries of Marx's theory, just as its persuasiveness, finally remain a matter of judgment, not proof. They are "essentially contestable," and so each person's decision on where they lie is intimately related to her or his own identity and concerns in a way that argument alone is unlikely to change.[8]

In this essay, then, I will explore the social and political theory of Karl Marx from a non-"Marxist" perspective. That means, practically speaking, that I will start out from one of the many unsolved riddles about Marx's thought and try to read through and beyond it, as he might have, in order to learn where the theory has to go next. Now, there is no more obscure question about his theory than its relation to his Jewish background. Jews and Judaism obviously provide a potent symbol for the organization of Marx's political thinking. It is to the

"Jewish question" Marx turns when he announces his break with Left Hegelianism, and again when he renews his fire at Bruno Bauer in The Holy Family. In the succinctly worded Theses on Feuerbach, Marx takes the time to chide his opponent for considering practical activity "only in its dirty-judaical manifestation."[9] Overt references to Judaism are fewer in his later writings, yet on careful reading even Capital exhibits the stance Marx earlier identified as "Jewish": the assertion of present human need against the claims of philosophical idealism that it had already made humanity free.

Yet studies of Marx tend to deny any relation between Marx's Jewishness and his theory. Saul Padover offers the most simplistic account: Marx was an anti-semite; therefore, he could not have learned anything from Judaism. "Marx's hatred of Jews was a canker which neither time nor experience ever eradicated from his soul."[10] It "reflected nearly total ignorance, possibly willful, of the lives and faith of the people from whom he descended."[11] I will demonstrate (in chapter 1) that Marx is nothing like a simple antisemite, that his attitude is much more ambivalent than it seems, and that on the whole he comes out supporting the claims of Judaism against those of Christianity. All this, however, is somewhat beside the point. Antisemitism in no way

precludes learning from the Jewish tradition, especially in the case of internalized antisemitism on the part of one who was born into that tradition. The really interesting question would be: how did Marx's conflicted relationship to his own Jewishness affect the manner of his learning from Jewish thought?

This is where more serious objections arise. David McLellan offers one. According to him, marginality, not Jewishness, was the element of Marx's background which shaped his theory. "Marx was all the more predisposed to take a critical look at society as he came from a milieu that was necessarily excluded from complete social participation."[12] A stress on the outsider status of German Jews in the nineteenth century tends to downplay the significance of the content of Jewish identity, and this is McLellan's intention. He contends that Marx shows "virtually no sign of Jewish self-consciousness in his published writings or in his private letters."[13]

> Some students of Marx believe they have found the key to Marx's whole system of ideas in his rabbinic ancestry; but although some of his ideas--and even life-style--have echoes of the prophetic tradition, this tradition is more or less part of the Western intellectual heritage; and it would be too simplistic to reduce Marx's ideas to a secularized Judaism.[14]

Shlomo Avineri roots Marx's theory firmly in one specific part of the "Western intellectual heritage," namely "his Hegelian antecedents." Hegel's philosophy,

argues Avineri, is "a unique synthesis between the theological traditions of the Judeo-Christian [sic] world and the intellectual achievements of the Enlightenment."[15] In order to grant any importance whatever to Marx's Jewishness, Avineri first demands a solution to "the problem of Marx's own awareness of those specific traditions held responsible for his own views."[16] Avineri and McLellan represent a widely-held orthodoxy as to the irrelevance of Judaism to Marx's theory.[17] They would undoubtedly endorse the following summary by a sociologist of religion.

> Marx was not a Jew in any religious, national, or cultural sense. He knew nothing about Judaism and showed no interest in the subject. Nor did he "inherit" any rabbinic or talmudic qualities or properties. These are acquired skills, no more transmitted by birth than a knowledge of philosophy or geology would be.[18]

As literary theorist Susan Handelman writes, "To try to prove that a Jewish background has some influence on even the most avowedly secular Jews is a difficult and complicated task."[19] I shall not attempt it here, even though I believe (and will show in chapter 1) that the "irrelevance" argument is much overstated. Instead of tracing influence, though, I will outline the structural affinities between Marx's thought and the worldview of the Jewish tradition. Marx's ontology, I suggest in chapters 2 and 3, makes much more sense read through the particular

notions of being and becoming, space and time which animate the Hebrew bible. His peculiar use of language (what Bertell Ollman, after Vilfredo Pareto, calls "words that appear like bats")[20] likewise seems almost familiar in a Hebraic context.

In chapter 4, I view Marx's philosophy of writing in light of midrash, the classic Jewish style of hermeneutics. In both these cases, the purpose of the comparison goes beyond mere coincidence towards the discovery of new meaning. My assumption is that it makes a difference if we find that Marx's theory becomes richer in the matrix of the Jewish tradition than in the Greco-Christian tradition of philosophy taken alone. The difference that it makes becomes clear in our changed conception of Marx's overall project. Chapter 5 attempts to reconstruct that project, drawing on the added understanding that an acquaintance with the plotline of the biblical narrative (with its themes of exile and return and its Messianic promise) bestows. Finally, in the conclusion, I consider how we, today, must reinterpret Marx's task in order to fulfill it.

Just to be clear: when I suggest certain elements of Jewish thought can serve us as an appropriate context in which to read Marx, I do not wish to deny the interpretive usefulness of other approaches. The way we will take here, though, is practically unexplored. To pursue it, we may

find ourselves far afield, even temporarily out of sight of the well-trodden paths of Marx scholarship. That need not bother us. We know the way back, and we can leave it for later, by the hearth's glow at the end of the journey, to try to trace the routes on the same map. For now, we must simply follow our own trail.

Nor need we stumble on the mistaken notion that if an idea of Marx's is not solely or exclusively Jewish, we cannot read it in the context of the Jewish tradition. Part of what it means to participate in a tradition is to be sensitive to how one part of that tradition comments on and is enriched by all the others. Ideas are not free agents. We understand their content and their significance in relation to the complex of other thoughts and themes in which we are accustomed to finding them. If we decide to relate Marx's writings to Jewish thought, we open ourselves to a whole world of allusions and associations, and we begin to make out an already ongoing conversation in which old statements may resonate with new meanings. The question for us is not whether Marx wants to be a part of this conversation, but whether we do.

One more caveat: when I propose to explore the structural affinities between Marx's thinking and Jewish thought, I am not subscribing to any of the rival

"structuralisms" or "post-structuralisms" which have recently deluged social theory. As I understand Marx, dichotomies like "structure vs. event" or "form vs. content" have little help to offer us in engaging with him.

As for the tack I am taking here, a non-"Marxist" approach to Marx through the question of his relation to Judaism, it leads immediately towards two potential dangers: misreading Judaism to make it foreshadow Marx or misreading Marx to make him somehow more Jewish. With respect to the first, presenting a living religious culture as an ideology, to some extent limitations of scope make this unavoidable. To compensate, whenever relevant, I will differentiate among movements and periods in Jewish history. I will try at all times to indicate when I am offering a controversial perspective on Jewish belief, whether that perspective is my own, Marx's, or belongs to someone else. Yet controversy is an integral part of the Jewish tradition, and innovations can sometimes claim the authority of something "already told to Moses at Sinai"--even mine.

As for the opposite danger, what McLellan calls "reduc[ing] Marx's idea to a secularized Judaism, I confess I do not see how exactly it could be done. Certainly, it is no part of my intention; indeed, it runs directly counter to a crucial feature of my interpretation. For I understand Marx as a political thinker <u>in exile</u>: a man

trying to express the truths of one reality in the language, the concepts, the grammar of another. Caught between what can be done...and what must be, misunderstanding his own predicament, compelled to write, fated not to be heard, Marx never found himself a home in either philosophy or Jewish thought. His work remains unfinished, a legacy to generations of seekers. If we attempt to recover the meanings of Marx's thought which only emerge from the context of the Jewish tradition, it is not to simplify his project, but rather to elaborate it for the purpose of taking it up anew.

To quote the most subtle of his biographers:

> Karl Marx was not merely a revolutionary, a theorist of socialism, or a figure in the history of economic or political theory. He was--and remains--an exemplary presence in the development of modern consciousness, whose significance is not exhausted by the truth or falsity of the specific doctrines he propounded. His life exemplifies the link that joins thought to action, and the gap that separates them.[21]

Because in modernity, we live our lives in the midst of that divide, struggling to forge that link: because we, too, are strangers in a land not our own, our dialogue with Marx goes on.

CHAPTER ONE

FOUR JEWISH QUESTIONS ABOUT MARX

Anyone who has seriously studied Marx has read the essay "On the Jewish Question," perhaps only once, or perhaps too often. Whether one time or many, we have been taught to read it in a special way that an innocent reader would never think of alone. This peculiar consensus echoes in the words of David McLellan when the writes that the "central problem" of "On the Jewish Question" is "the contemporary separation of the state from civil society and the consequent failure of liberal politics to solve social questions."[1] Louis Dupre defines the essay's theme this way:

> Attacking Bauer's proposal of total secularization as the solution of the Jewish problem in Germany, Marx claimed that the secular, democratic state is the modern version of the religious illusion. It maintains the same relation of apparent dominance and real subservience to civil society which exists between the religious sphere and the profane world.[2]

Both these writers agree that the liberal notion of freedom is Marx's real target in "On the Jewish Question." They construe that notion as the real subject of the essay. Accordingly, Jews and Judaism enter the picture only incidentally. McLellan considers the nominal issue "a convenient peg on which to hang his [Marx's] criticism of the liberal state," while Dupre locates the "Jewish

question" within Marx's general critique of religion. Together with Shlomo Avineri, who ignores Judaism altogether in his exposition, they delimit what has become the orthodox approach to the article. It is an approach which has proved enormously powerful in extracting theoretical resources from the rough terrain of Marx's rhetoric. Like any extractive technology, however, it leaves a changed landscape behind it.

If we were to read "On the Jewish Question" for the first time, naively, we surely would not blurt out, "What is Marx saying about freedom? How does he relate the state to civil society?" Instead, I imagine we could almost not help asking, "Why is this man so antisemitic?"

That he is shockingly antisemitic, the essay appears to leave no doubt. True, in its first, longer installment (responding to Bruno Bauer's book Die Judenfrage), Marx's animus reveals itself less blatantly. He sins by omission only, repeating without comment Bauer's claim, "The Jew, by his [sic] very nature, cannot be emancipated...since he opposes his illusory nationality to actual nationality, his illusory law to actual law."[3] In the second section, though, Marx seems fairly to bristle with anti-Jewish sentiments. He begins by substituting for Bauer's inquiry into "the capacity of present-day Jews and Christians to become free" the question: "What specific social element

is it necessary to overcome in order to abolish Judaism?"[5] Jews, says Marx, can only become free when, as Jews, they no longer exist.

It would be a mistake, however, to think Marx advocates genocide, or even religious assimilation, as a solution. If religion in general (read: Christianity) is the opium of the people, in Marx's view the Jewish religion in particular lacks the power to produce even illusory happiness. Religious Judaism is a mere nullity which "would evaporate like some insipid vapour in the real life-giving air of society," if society were as it should be. Indeed, totally disregarding the content of Jewish belief, Marx identifies Judaism completely with the economic arrangements he finds prevailing in capitalist society, and the abolition of Judaism with the transcendence of capitalism.

> Let us consider the real Jew: not the sabbath Jew, whom Bauer considers, but the everyday Jew.
>
> Let us not seek the secret of the Jew in his [sic] religion, but let us seek the secret of the religion in the real Jew.
>
> What is the profane basis of Judaism? Practical need, self interest. What is the worldly cult of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his [sic] worldly god? Money.
>
> Very well: then in emancipating itself from huckstering and money, and thus from practical Judaism, our age would emancipate itself.[6]

"Money," writes Marx, "is the jealous god of Israel, beside which no other god may exist." In order to speak of the growing power of money over politics, Marx carries the association to its outer limits: society, he declares, has become "Jewish."

> The god of the Jews has become secularized and has become the god of this world. The bill of exchange is the real god of the Jew. His [sic] god is only an illusory bill of exchange.[7]

On this account, Marx finds nothing incongruous in speaking of "the effective domination of the Christian world by Judaism." On this point, he can even quote Bauer with approval: "...in theory, the Jew is deprived of political rights, while in practice he [sic] wields tremendous power and exercises on a wholesale scale the political influence which is denied him in minor matters."[8] Because "the Jew" functions as a symbol for Marx's thinking, he does not really mean to subscribe to a Jewish conspiracy theory, but the overtones are still ominous.

II

The question as to the reason for Marx's antisemitism brings a second, equally troubling question in its wake. Why is it that writers on Marx leave his anti-Jewish slurs unchallenged, even unexamined? Not <u>unnoticed</u>, certainly: nearly every commentator mentions antisemitism in passing

(again with Avineri as a notable exception). They bring it up, however, only to denounce it or to excuse it, never to confront it as a problem in itself. It is as if there never were a "Jewish question," as if the substance of what Marx says about Jews were entirely unimportant.

We may take McLellan's book once again as the epitome of how Marx's anti-Jewish harangue is usually treated. "It is true," he admits, "that a quick and unreflective reading of, particularly, the briefer second section, leaves a nasty impression." Furthermore, Marx is known to have "indulged elsewhere in anti-Jewish remarks--though none as sustained as here." On the other hand, McLellan notes, in the same year Marx wrote "On the Jewish Question," he lent his support to a petition for Jewish rights, commenting to his associate Arnold Ruge, "The point is to punch as many holes as possible in the Christian state and smuggle in rational views as far as we can." In fact, suggests McLellan, the whole antisemitic line of thought in Marx's essay may be largely accidental. "The German word for Jewry--Judentum--has the secondary sense of commerce and, to some extent, Marx played on this double meaning."[9] To some extent!

The implicit conclusion is clear. Marx's anti-semitism has been exaggerated, and in any case is

tangential to his main point. No harm done in ignoring it. Time to move on.

The problem with this way of reading Marx is that it takes for granted the same dubious assumption that Marx relies on: that we can learn something from the "Jewish question" without actually paying attention to it. At first glance, it might seem Marx is simply following the same procedure we used earlier in interpreting his utterance "I am not a Marxist." Out of the social fact that German Jews seek emancipation, he divines a new meaning: that the liberal state must ever fail to create freedom for all of its citizens because it depends for its own power on an inherently unfree and unequal economic system. In our exegesis, though, we kept the original situation in plain view even while we departed from it. Our resulting interpretation added a new layer of meaning to the tension between Marx and his followers at the same time as it opened up the new question of how Marx wrote. Marx's reformulation of Bauer's topic, though, makes the original controversy invisible, and the Jews, its subject, along with it. What is more, by adhering to Marx's explicit argument, commentators like McLellan obscure the Jewish question of "On the Jewish Question" even further. And this is too bad, for two reasons.

The first is that when a Jew makes antisemitic remarks and no one disputes them, even the well-meaning will wonder if they are not true after all. For "there is probably no individual, from Abraham and Moses to Herzl and Martin Buber, to whom the epithet 'Jew' has been more persistently applied than Marx..."[10] Born in 1818 in the ancient city of Trier, Karl Marx descended from three centuries of rabbis on both sides of his family tree, including scions of the illustrious Heschel and Katzenelenbogen families.[11] His father, Hirschel ha-Levi Marx, changed his name to Heinrich upon his conversion to Christianity about a year before Karl was born. Hirschel's baptism was a matter of economics, not faith: the Prussian government had begun to enforce its requirements that all lawyers be Christians. Paris vaut bien une messe. The Jewish faith also had held little attraction for him. A staunch rationalist, in philosophy a follower of Kant, Hirschel believed in a simple deism, "the faith of Newton, Locke, and Leibniz."[12] Yet his ties to the Jewish people remained firm enough that in 1815, he drafted a long memorandum to protest an edict aimed at bankrupting Jewish moneylenders, while in the following year he unsuccessfully sought a special exemption to allow him to keep both his religion and his livelihood.[13] In all probability, Karl Marx's father was one of the many Jews who converted

"without really relinquishing their family and social ties with the [Jewish] community."[14]

Karl's mother, Henriette Pressburg Marx, remained even more stubbornly entrenched in her Jewish identity. The daughter of a Dutch rabbi, she probably spoke Yiddish in her parents' home; whether she continued doing so in Trier is uncertain, but we know from her letters that she never bothered to learn to write German grammatically.[15] She resisted conversion until 1825, nearly eight years after her husband's baptism and almost a year after her children's (including that of Karl, who was then six and a half). From her correspondence, it is clear that the Marxes retained their Jewish contacts, especially with Hirschel's sister-in-law, the widow of the rabbi of Trier, and her children. Even in 1853, a full eighteen years after adopting the Lutheran church, Henriette could write to her own sister about Karl's sister's departure for South Africa: "And it seems that the lot of the People is again being realized in me--that my children should be scattered throughout the world..."[16]

As for Marx himself, one biographer asserts:

> Karl Marx spent his earliest years in a family whose religious division was a witness to the way society's power over men's livelihoods could play tricks on their self-conceptions, forcing them to deny their convictions.[17]

Whether for that reason or some other, Marx never studied Hebrew, even though the language was taught at the Gymnasium he attended at by a (Christian) member of the Casino Club, a pro-French organization to which Hirschel Marx also belonged.[18] In Berlin, however, Karl did learn jurisprudence under Eduard Gans, one of the founders of the Wissenschaft des Judentums movement, and it was under that instructor that he first paid serious attention to Hegel.[19] In later years, Marx would cross paths with an extraordinary selection of "non-Jewish Jews," including Heinrich Heine, Moses Hess, Ferdinand Lassalle, and Ludwig Kugelmann. He also made a friend of the rationalist Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz.

More crucial for our purposes than Marx's relations with other Jews, however, is the fact that others recognized Marx as a Jew. A sponsor of the Rheinische Zeitung, the Cologne paper Marx edited in 1842, gives us this description.

> Karl Marx from Trier was a powerful man of 24 whose thick black hair sprung from his cheeks, arms, nose, and ears. He was domineering, impetuous, passionate, full of boundless self-confidence, but at the same time deeply earnest and learned, a restless dialectician who with his restless Jewish penetration pushed every proposition of Young Hegelian doctrine to its final conclusion...[20]

Aside from his "penetration" and his hairiness, Marx also sported a swarthy complexion which gave rise to his interesting alias. Writes Engels, "'The Moor' was Marx's

nickname from his University days on... If I had ever called him by some other name, he would have thought some misunderstanding had arisen between us."[21] Yet all his intimates understood "Moor" as "a veiled reminder of his Jewish origins."[22] His daughter Eleanor undertook to lift the veil by learning Yiddish and "talking union" in the Jewish quarters of London. There, she was known to declare, "I am a Jewess"[23]--which was not literally true, since Jewish religious law counts descent through the mother. So vivid was her conviction of her beloved father's Jewishness that she freely took the identity on herself.

If modern writers on Marx leave his scurrilous attacks on Judaism unanswered, then, they run the risk of helping to perpetuate them. Along with Freud and Einstein, Marx is the world's figure of the Jew. Who should know better, the naive may justly ask, what Jewish faults are than the Jew Karl Marx?

III

Besides the moral obligation to combat antisemitism, there is another reason to be astonished at Marx scholars' neglect of the Jewish question, one that touches directly on their theoretical concerns. Let us say that Marx's real targets in this essay are the liberal notion of freedom and the modern separation of state and civil

society, as is generally supposed. Marx achieves his commentary on these themes in a marvelously indirect manner. At every step of his argument, he makes his point by manipulating the various meanings he imputes to the symbol "Judaism" and by contrasting them with the meanings he ascribes to "Christianity." It would seem, then, that we have to unpack those heavily laden symbols in order to understand what Marx is saying about politics and freedom. But that is exactly what has not been done.

"The German Jews seek emancipation. What kind of emancipation do they want? Civic, political emancipation."[24] From his opening sentences on, Marx looks to the case of the Jews to shed light on how people become free. Bruno Bauer had argued that Judaism, with its arrogant peculiarity, prevented Jews from participating fully in the life of the state. If they would agree, for instance, to attend legislative sessions even when they took place on Saturday, then they would be eligible for the full set of rights political emancipation implies.

> If, thereafter, some or many or even the overwhelming majority felt obliged to fulfil their religious duties, such practices should be left to them as an absolutely private matter.[25]

Precisely because it preserves religion as a private duty, Marx rejects political emancipation as an inadequate formula for human freedom. The Hegelian ideal of the state which motivates Bauer calls for politics to be a

sphere of universality, in which all the higher needs of the spirit are met. To Bauer as well as to Marx himself, "The existence of religion is the existence of a defect."[26] If Jews (or Christians, for that matter) hold onto their religious practices, it is prima facie evidence that the state is not fulfilling their needs, and that the non-political still exerts great power over their choices. The incapacity of purely political means to make people free is not confined to the state's defeat by religion, however.

> The political elevation of man [sic] above religion shares the weaknesses and merits of all such political measures. For example, the state as a state abolishes private property (i.e., man [sic] decrees by political means the abolition of private property) when it abolishes the property qualification for electors and representatives...
>
> But the political suppression of private property not only does not abolish private property, it actually presupposes its existence. The state abolishes, after its fashion, the distinctions established by birth, social rank, education, occupation, when it decrees that birth, social rank, education, occupation are non-political distinctions; when it proclaims, without regard to these distinctions, that every member of society is an equal partner in popular sovereignty, and treats all the elements which compose the real life of the nation from the standpoint of the state. But the state, none the less, allows private property, education, occupation, to act after their own fashion, namely as private property, education, occupation, and to manifest their particular nature.[27]

Instead of real universality, the state makes manifest "the illusory universality of modern political life."[28] Just as Jews do not become emancipated by the

ballot if they still need the synagogue, so self-interested individuals do not become free, rational citizens simply by acquiring political rights. Both the Jew and the bourgeois remain subject to an external power, be it religion or money, even if (in their alienated way) they embrace it as their own. In fact, because politics has failed to create a home for the human spirit, the only sensible thing to do is to hang on to one's private good.

> Bauer asks the Jews: Have you, from your standpoint, the right to demand political emancipation? We ask the converse question: from the standpoint of political emancipation can the Jew be required to abolish Judaism, or man [sic] be asked to abolish religion?[29]

Remarkable is the sympathetic tone Marx adopts toward his fellow Jews at this stage of the argument. It is almost as if he were cautioning them not to sell their birthright (on which he spends such harsh words later) for the mess of pottage that is modern citizenship. He reproves them, not for their religious faith, but for their political credulity.

> If you want to be politically emancipated, without emancipating yourselves humanly, the inadequacy and the contradiction is not entirely in yourselves but in the nature and the category of political emancipation. If you are preoccupied with this category you share the general prejudice.[30]

IV

But of course, Marx does discover a real form of

freedom for which he thinks giving up Judaism would be amply worthwhile: namely, "human emancipation." Oddly, in all the essay, he affords it only one paragraph of its own.

> Human emancipation will only be complete when the real, individual man [sic] has abosrbed into himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual man, in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a species-being; and when he has recognized and organized his own powers (forces propres) as social powers so that he no longer separates this social power from himself as political power.[31]

This is an enigmatic passage, to say the least. It is difficult to say what Marx means by "human emancipation," except that it will overcome the fragmentation and insufficiency of communal life that political emancipation only feeds. The problem for the reader is to discern that underlying the distinction between political and human emancipation is an even more basic divide, between "civil society" and the "political state." Or, to be even more precise, we need to realize that a society which splits life into these two spheres differs dramatically from a society in which they are united.

What is the "political state"? In the Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Marx traces the emergence of a sphere of politics, centered on government, laws, and constitutions, which lies alongside the parts of human life concerned with survival "without materially permeating the content of the remaining, non-

political spheres." Hegel claimed the state subsumed and transcended all the particular activities of material life. Marx debunks this claim of universality. As "political state," he argues, the state merely puts itself forth as one more fragment of national life, in no way integrating or integrated with the rest.

> In monarchy, for example, and in the republic as a merely particular form of state, political man [sic] has his particular mode of being alongside unpolitical man, man as a private individual. Property, contract, marriage, civil society, all appear here...as particular modes of existence alongside the political state, as the content to which the political state is related as organising form; properly speaking, the relation of the political state to this content is merely that of reason, inherently without content, which defines and delimits, which now affirms and now denies.[32]

According to Marx, "The abstraction of the state as such belongs only to modern times, because the abstraction of private life belongs only to modern times." Other ages and other cultures did not split off the "political constitution as distinct from the material state or the other content of the life of the nation." In ancient Greece, for example, "The res publica is the real private affair of the citizens, their real content, and the private individual is a slave"--i.e., only slaves bore the brand of an identity having nothing to do with their role in public life. During the Middle Ages, again, "The life of the nation and the life of the state are identical,"

but only because one's membership in an estate, a guild, or a corporation determine one's political status. "What distinguishes the modern state from these states characterized by the substantial unity between people and state," to Marx, is "that the constitution itself has been developed into a particular actuality alongside the life of the people--that the political state has become the constitution of the rest of the state."[33] The quest for a fully human existence is severed from, and set against, the activities which secure existence itself.

The same historical dividing up of social life that produces the political state at the same time gives birth to civil society. In "On the Jewish Question," Marx specifies that he means by civil society "the sphere of human needs, labour, private interests, and civil law."[34] From human needs, the other elements follow. Since Marx assesses human needs in two distinctly different ways, he also holds two opposed evaluations of civil society, neither of which, however, can stand without the other. Human needs are first of all for Marx a type of deprivation, an absence of something the lack of which frustrates human powers and stunts the development of the species. At the same time, though, needs spur human invention, open up as yet unrealized capacities--in short, spur human development.

Indeed, acquiring new and more sophisticated needs is part of what Marx thinks progress is all about.[35]

Civil society, the sphere of human needs, reflects both the negative and the positive evaluation. Shorn of "even the semblance of a general content,"[36] civil society is a realm of pure egoism. Within it, each person is only "an individual separated from the community, withdrawn into himself [sic], wholly preoccupied with his private interest and acting in accordance with his private caprice."[37] If the political state fails to provide universal freedom, civil society never aspires to it. Paradoxically, then, Marx goes on to argue that civil society and not politics forms the real basis for human emancipation. "Political man sic is only abstract, artificial man, man as an allegorical, moral person."[38] Civil society, the world of practical need, constitutes the effective reality in which people actually live. Narrow and selfish it may be, but only changes in civil society can be powerful enough to move the species beyond civil society and political state alike, towards an integrated, meaningful, species life. Both civil society and the political state are human inventions, as Marx sees it. Neither is natural nor inevitable; both are becoming obsolete. Yet Marx champions the importance of civil society for future emancipation, not because it is good but because it is

effective. His commitment embraces the nasty but real over the nice but fictional.

The dialectic between political state and civil society helps us to understand what Marx means by human, as opposed to merely political, emancipation. Political emancipation deepens the split in social life while human emancipation overcomes it, reconstituting social relations on the basis of what people require in order both to survive and to live humanly. Without the concepts "civil society" and "political state," Marx's reply to Bauer seems perverse, or simply meaningless. Thus, it is striking that no one has explored a crucial element of these concepts as Marx presents them in the essay--that the political state is "Christian," while civil society is "Jewish."[39]

Marx contradicts the liberal notion that separation of church and state removes politics from the influence of religion. Instead, he sees in liberal democracy "the perfected Christian state," more Christian even than "the state which is still theological" which is merely "the Christian negation of the state."[40] By privatizing religion instead of abolishing it, the political state helps perpetuate the Christian projection of human powers onto a transcendent God.[41] In order to end this alienation,

the state would have to become involved in answering the unmet needs that drive people to the private solace of religion. For the political state, though, that is impossible, since (Marx argues) its whole claim to emancipate rests on its refusal to take private differences into account in the way it treats its citizens. There is neither rich nor poor, Jew nor Gentile, to the political state. For Marx, that fact alone speaks volumes about the origins of that state "under the sway of Christianity, which objectifies all national, natural, moral, and theoretical relationships."[42]

We have already seen that Marx does not think any more highly of Judaism than of Christianity as a faith. Indeed, he tends to dismiss the concept of Judaism altogether. How, then, can he identify civil society, the effective reality of social life, as "Jewish"? Marx draws a distinction between "sabbath" Judaism, the theology he considers an "insipid vapour," and "everyday" Judaism, "the particular situation of Judaism in the present enslaved world."[43] Just as civil society is the social engine that the political state aims to veil, so the everyday Jew, in Marx's formulation, is the secret of the Jewish religion. Marx sums up the Jewish situation in 19th-century Germany as "practical need, self-interest."[44] The Jews' place in the economy forces them to make self-

preservation through money their truest faith. But "practical need, egoism is the principle of civil society" as well.[45] It is for this reason, he asserts, "Judaism attains its apogee with the perfection of civil society; but civil society only reaches perfection in the Christian world."[46] In other words, "Jewish" civil society only dominates the "Christian" political state once Christianity succeeds in separating the state from civil society. By attempting to banish human need, Christianity succumbs to it.

> It was only in appearance that Christianity overcame real Judaism. It was too refined, too spiritual to eliminate the crudeness of practical need except by raising it into the ethereal realm.[47]

V

Reading what Marx has to say about Jews and Judaism as if it mattered enables us to make two interesting discoveries concerning the thinker and his theory. First, we learn that Marx's reputation as an antisemite obscures the true complexity of his views on Judaism immensely. Judaism as a religion, he holds in greatest contempt. Judaism as a social force, on the other hand, Marx regards as supremely important. What Marx chooses to call "Jewish" is nothing less than the driving force of his social and political theory: the reality of human need, as expressed in the contradictions of capitalist society.

> It is indeed no longer asked: which makes free--Judaism or Christianity? On the contrary, it is now asked: which makes free--the negation of Judaism or the negation of Christianity?[48]

Marx's answer is clear. The negation of "Judaism" is essential to emancipation, whereas the negation of "Christianity" leads to nothing--because the "Christian" political state is itself a nothing, an illusion, possessed of no power to produce anything substantial. Marx's tribute to Judaism is the kind of recognition one grants a skilled and potent adversary. From a man who lists his idea of happiness as "to fight" and of misery "to submit," this is a compliment, indeed.[49]

As a corollary, though, we must realize that we have not understood what Marx's theory means until we understand what Judaism means to Marx. We know that it symbolizes the gritty details of how people make a living, the historically unresolved problem of human need. But why <u>this</u> symbol?[50] Such representations do not, as a rule, arise from nowhere: they are prepared by associations in the writer's mind which grow more vivid at opportune moments, only to fade when they begin no longer to be needed. Jerrold Seigel points out one reason why Judaism may have seemed particularly relevant to Marx in 1843: his opponent.

> If Bauer was a former religious Christian who had freed himself by denying Christianity, Marx was in origin a secularized Jew who regarded himself as liberated from "practical Judaism," self-interest. Marx's claim against Bauer was that his own personal

> standpoint--granting all its defects--rather than Bauer's, provided the point of entry for true human liberation.[51]

Certainly, there is something to this. Bauer's argument and Marx's reply resemble nothing so much as that ingenious medieval trial by ordeal, the religious disputation. Like the Christian clerics, Bauer claims Judaism has outlived its reason for being and only survives on invincible stubborn refusal to see the facts. Marx argues like a rabbi who is mindful of the monarch's eye: without claiming any positive virtues for the faith, he finds reasons nevertheless to justify its existence and thus bests his accuser at his own game.[52] While this desire to score points on Bauer may tell us something about Marx's motivation, it still leaves the content of Marx's symbol "Judaism" wholly unexplained.

Our reading of this essay therefore leads us to ask yet a third question: the "Jewish question" itself. What did 19th-century Germans mean by "the Jewish question"? What did the phrase mean to Marx? What was Marx's own experience of Jews and Judaism outside his immediate family, and how did it color what he had to say on the issue? If the "Jewish question" is tied up in Marx's thinking with his ideas about how people become free, then what does his stance towards the emancipation of the Jews tell us today about his notion of freedom?

At the beginning of the 19th century, when German liberals inspired by French revolutionary ideals were agitating the Prussian monarchy for a constitution, the status of Jews throughout the kingdom remained unchanged since the Middle Ages. Jews were not citizens in Germany. Under the law, they were not even human. They existed as servi camerae, "serfs of the chamber," the personal property of the king, to be disposed of at his pleasure. German rulers valued their Jews as an unending source of revenue: they zealously maintained the autonomous Jewish social structure so as to make entire Jewish communities responsibile for tax levies collectively rather than per capita. Non-payment was likely to result in the taking of the rabbi or other local leaders as hostages. Like other serfs, Jews could not move from one town to another, marry, or have more than one child without permission. Because of their international connections, however, Jews were officially encouraged to settle in Germany with a view to facilitating trade. Periodically, to assuage Christian merchants' resentment, the government turned a blind eye while pogroms, anti-Jewish riots, decimated the Jewish population. Invariably, a new set of Jews would be invited in to continue the cycle.[53]

Under Napoleon, after a lengthy investigation of their allegiance, the Jews of Germany became citizens

before the law. In practice, the edict was enforced spottily. Because of its origins, Jewish emancipation "was stigmatized by the concept of tyranny which in the eyes of the gentile population was attached to all acts of the Napoleonic regime."[54] 1816 saw the restrictions on Jewish trade which aroused Hirschel Marx's protest; 1817, the decrees against Jewish lawyers which moved him to convert. In the year Karl Marx was born, anti-Jewish riots broke out in Prussia and continued into the next year. (Because some Jews, especially veterans of the Napoleonic wars, fought back, the whole Jewish community of Wurzburg was expelled.[55]) In December 1822, Frederick William III barred Jews from teaching at universities or schools.[56] The advocates of Jewish emancipation were forced to realize that nominal citizenship would not suffice. They turned their efforts to tearing down all invidious legislation standing in the way of full Jewish participation in public life.

Before they could grapple with the laws, though, they had to confront centuries-old prejudices against the Jewish people. "The image of the Jew prevailing in the public mind," writes leading Jewish historian Jacob Katz,

> was the image of the popular Christian tradition, combining the theological tenets of the Jews' guilt in rejecting the Christian message and an aversion to the foreign tradesman whose greed and cunning remain unchecked by a common brotherhood in the one creed.[57]

That this caricature convinced many educated Germans is borne out in the history of the term "Jewish emancipation." The Jews' initial thrust at citizenship was called by the name of "naturalization," implying that all Jews had been aliens in Germany up until then. An enlightened Protestant minister then introduced the nomenclature "civic betterment" (burgerliche verbesserung) which became widespread, partly because it left ambiguous who was to be bettered, society or the Jews. (The term "advancement" in the name of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People shares some of the same uncertainty.) Jewish advocates finally took up the term "emancipation" because it "implied that natural rights had been withheld till then from those concerned, and that these must be restored to them unconditionally."[58] Precisely for this reason, opponents of Jewish rights objected strenuously to the label "emancipation." Jews, they contended, already had all the rights they could handle: as Jews, they were too morally degraded to be equal to full citizenship.[59]

The fear and suspicion of Jews that led to denunciations such as these did not only arise from the popular images of Christ-killers and Jewish moneymen, however. Cultural differences made the Jews and Christians of Europe strangers to each other, all the more incomprehensible for their apparent similarities. From the

Christian side, the "Jewish question" therefore took on the form of the query, "Are the Jews congenitally unsociable and rude, or are they this way as the result of being segregated into ghettos?"[60] John Murray Cuddihy calls this emphasis on the unseemly manners of the would-be emancipated Jews "the ordeal of civility." "This problem," he writes, "stems ultimately...from a disabling inability of Judaism to legitimate culturally the differentiation of culture and society..."[61] Put more simply: the Jews of Europe were unable, unwilling, or failed to recognize the need to privatize their particular concerns and characteristics in order to become good citizens. The politeness of public life in the Christian polity, "the fragile solidarity of the survace we call civility,"[62] created a schism in the lives and the personalities of the Jews who first encountered it.

> With the advent of Jewish Emancipation, when ghetto walls crumble and the shtetlach begin to dissolve, Jewry--like some wide-eyed anthropologist--enters upon a strange world, to explore a strange people observing a strange halakha [code of conduct]. They examine this world in dismay, with wonder, anger, and punitive objectivity.[63]

The Christian world, of course, returns the compliment, judging Jewish behavior by its own standards as "public misconduct," and resisting every attempt to violate its norms of what can be spoken of and what, for the sake of decency, must be kept silent.

The Jewish question in Germany, then, was nothing else but Christian puzzlement as to how to treat an entire people who are unfitted to be free. Now, although Marx rejects its theological underpinnings, he shares the common assessment of the Jewish religion. Indeed, his strictures on "Jewish Jesuitism" descend in a straight line from the Gospel image of the Pharisees via Paul's anathema on "the Law" in the name of "the Spirit."[64] About the provenance of this stereotype, at least, there is no mystery. Marx also accepts the stock picture of the Jewish moneyman, right down to the term Judentum for "commerce." Even if he does twist its usual meaning into an indictment of Christian society for its own "Jewishness," he can only achieve this end by agreeing to identify Jews and money.

What is curious about this is that nothing in Marx's native milieu would naturally lead him to this conclusion. His birthplace, Trier, contained only 260 Jews out of a population of 12,000--a little higher than the national average, but still only roughly 2%. Among the more urban Jews of Trier, the statistically most likely occupations would have been artisanship and innkeeping, not money-lending or trade.[65] There was little scope for high finance in Trier anyway: located in the heart of the Moselle wine country, its economy was primarily agricultural. In fact, though a higher percentage of Jews

than non-Jews lived in cities, the Jewish population of the government district centered on Trier was 68.5% rural, or more than two-thirds.[66] If Marx had written only of what he really experienced, neither his negative identification of Jews and "huckstering," nor its double, Judaism as the elemental social force of human need, would have been possible for him.

VI

The symbols "Jew" and "Judaism" in Karl Marx's "On the Jewish Question" owe their existence to widely-held stereotypes rather than empirical example. Marx employs them as literary terms of art, playing on their various nuances to denigrate the political state (because its existence implies that of "Jewish" civil society), to deride political emancipation (because it leaves "Judaism" in control), and to assert the superiority of his own approach ("the negation of Judaism") to the problem of how to make humanity free. Having said this, we still have left what Marx meant by "Judaism" in doubt. For, within the boundaries of those stereotypes, there is simply no room for the positive connotations the unity with practical need sheds on Judaism in Marx's theory. Instead of ennobling Judaism, one would think the link with casuistry, greed, and outlandish manners would demean civil society.

Yet for Marx, although the "Jewishness" of civil society is an argument for transcending it, its "Jewish" character is what makes its transcendence (and that of the state, and of the rift between them) possible. Apparently, the Jewish defects of civil society are its virtues as well. How can we understand this?

We must remember our earlier observation that for Marx to place value on any social phenomenon, it must really exist, i.e., produce material effects. (Marx's view is no simple utilitarianism: effective reality is a necessary condition of his esteem, but not always sufficient.) By this standard, we can readily see that "Jewish rudeness" must indeed be judged a virtue. In "On the Jewish Question," as noted earlier, Marx declares Christianity "too refined, too spiritual to eliminate the crudeness of practical need."[67] It takes no great leap of the imagination to read this as an indirect swipe at Bruno Bauer, since ignoring the power of practical need over political life is Marx's precise reproach to his former teacher. By calling attention to the brute economic facts, Marx violates the norms of Left Hegelian discourse and states unwelcome truths in an obnoxious "Jewish" manner.

Nor does he let the matter rest. In The Holy Family, the interminable polemic against the Left Hegelian

"critical Critics" that Marx and Engels compiled in 1844, the authors attack "St. Bruno" once again. And once more, Marx chooses the Jewish question as his battlefield. This time, though, he draws a tight connection between Jewish vulgarism and the ability to see the meaning of real human freedom, the kind that only communism (he now asserts) can achieve.

> To the massy, material Jews is to be preached the Christian doctrine of spiritual freedom, of freedom in theory, that spiritualistic freedom that imagines itself to be free even in chains, that is blissful in "the idea" and that is only embarrassed by all massy existence... From this statement one can measure at once the critical cleavage that divides massy, profane communism and socialism from absolute socialism. The first principle of profane socialism rejects emancipation in mere theory as an illusion, and desires for real freedom, besides the idealistic "will," very palpable, material conditions.[68]

The Jews are "massy" (of the masses, plebian) and they lead a "massy existence" (lumpish, material, real). They cannot imagine real freedom on their own: that is left for Marx himself to do. Even they are capable of seeing, though, that Bauer's proffered form of freedom stems partly from the desire not to be "embarrassed" by them any longer. For their cramped but secure mode of survival, Bauer offers "emancipation in mere theory." We can hear Marx warning, as he did in "On the Jewish Question," that the Jews must hold out for the real thing. Even more, however, we can recognize an unexpected parallel

Marx is drawing between profane socialism and the Jews. Profane socialism, in fact, seems to be distinguished by its insistence on changing "very palpable, material conditions": the same program which, one year earlier, Marx had called "the negation [or abolition, or transcendence] of Judaism." Marx's success at coming to grips with the real issue (as he understood it) of human freedom is here connected, not with his education, nor with his class background, but with his Jewishness. In later works, he tries to dodge the issue of his own consciousness, but here, between the lines, he hints at an explanation.

When we consider the argument of The Holy Family in conjunction with the line Marx pursues in "On the Jewish Question," the example of the Jews tells us vital elements of Marx's conception of how people become free. One predisposing factor is certainly the position they occupy in civil society, or what Marx calls "the particular situation of Judaism in the present enslaved world."[69] Another such factor would be a standpoint which is not "too refined, too spiritual" to concede the vicissitudes of human need; a perspective, a set of cultural resources that direct people to take material conditions seriously without being cowed into accepting them as immutable. Over his lifetime, Marx oscillates between granting one or the other the primary role. When revolution looks

imminent, he credits objective social relations, while when the prospects of upheaval dim, he turns to blame the ideological limitations of the masses.[70] In general, though, his attention shifts to the study of political economy, and as it does, the proletariat takes center stage, while the Jews disappear into the wings.

Continuously throughout Marx's writings, however, we find a tension in his notion of freedom that appears first and most clearly in "On the Jewish Question" as we have read it. Everyday, practical Judaism is rooted, according to Marx, in the realities of civil society during a capitalist age. For that reason, its negation goes lockstep with the superseding of the conditions that maintain it: the power of money, the exchange system, ultimately, capitalism itself. In the freed world, the Jewish perspective which had criticized the old society and helped the new one to be born would lose its reason for being. Both in its sabbath and everyday versions, it would disappear, the former exploded, the latter deprived of its material basis. The "particular situation" of Judaism would be dissolved. The Jews themselves would be absorbed into the species as the abstract citizen is absorbed into the individual.

And yet...even from the standpoint of <u>human</u> emancipation, "Can the Jews be required to abolish Judaism?"

Emancipation, as Marx describes it, proceeds by reading one's "particular situation" closely, finding its hidden possibilities, and reinterpreting it through action in order to become its author. It cannot succeed, however, if in the re-reading, the author is annihilated--for then who is it that becomes free? Marx's own identity is bound up with the "Jewish" activity of criticizing alienated human life. In what possible world would his anxiety over trading the substantial Jewish perspective for an illusory freedom finally disappear?

All of which presents us with a fourth and final question about Karl Marx. Could it be that Marx's social and political theory in general is structured by assumptions and patterns of thought which can also be found within the Jewish tradition? How would recognizing these affinities have transformed Marx's understanding of his theory? How might it affect ours? This is the Jewish question about Marx we will explore in the following chapters.

C H A P T E R T W O

THE POWER OF THE TONGUE

> Are we Jews? Are we Greeks? We live in the difference between the Jew and the Greek, which is perhaps the unity of what is called history. We live in and of difference; that is, in hypocrisy...
>
> Are we Greeks? Are we Jews? But what are we? Are we (not a chronological, but a prelogical question) first Jews or first Greeks? And does the strange dialogue between the Jew and the Greek, peace itself, have the form of the absolute speculative logic of Hegel, the living logic which reconciles formal tautology and empirical heterology... Or, on the contrary, does this peace have the form of infinite separation and of the unthinkable, unsayable transcendence of the other? To what horizon of peace does the language which asks this question belong? From whence does it draw the energy of its question? Can it account for the historical coupling of Judaism and Hellenism? And what is the legitimacy, what is the meaning of the copula in this proposition from perhaps the most Hegelian of modern novelists: "Jewgreek is greekjew." Extremes meet"?
>
> --Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics"[1]

The tradition within which we generally read the writings of Marx is called "modern political thought." It is a line of descent that stretches from Machiavelli down to the present day. Modern political thought can trace its origins to Christian theology. Either by continuing it or by reacting against it, modern theorists acknowledge this inheritance. Because of its Christian roots, the understanding of reality on which modern political thought has nurtured itself--what philosophers generally call an ontology--rests on the attempt to combine Jewish thinking

with Greek which has characterized so much of Christian religious thought.

Derrida's pointed questions suggest, however, that neither the theological nor the theoretical enterprise squarely confronts the question of its own possibility. What if Jewish and Greek thinking were radically and irreconcilably different, and to synthesize them would be to do violence to both? In order to consider that possibility, it seems, theorists and theologians alike would have to renounce the dream of absolute knowledge, whether of the world or the cosmos. One clear picture of how things are could only arise if, from the right perspective, the whole of reality made a single sense. If, though, the ontology on which we relied were fundamentally in tension with itself, then truth, too, would speak in many voices, and it would have to be heard that way, as well.

Derrida argues that, faced with a bedrock conflict between Jew and Greek, theorists should feel enormous pressure to question their motives for doing theory. What interest, he asks, compels the enforced detente between the two modes of though? Why do we cry "Peace, peace" when there is no peace? In the reduction of two divergent species of thought to one and the same--and, most keenly, in the expulsion of the specifically Jewish,

and the consequent bodily immersion of Western thought in the baptismal waters of the Greco-Christian tradition--Derrida detects a kind of Inquisition. He opposes this "ontological, or transcendental oppression,"[2] which does not consist of imposing one ontology on another, but rather of posing "ontology" (reality as Being, a peculiarly Greek notion) as the only way reality can be understood.[3]

Whether or not we confirm the full range of Derrida's suspicions, we find that, in order even to ask whether Jewish patterns of thought re-emerge in Karl Marx's thinking, we shall have to rescue the difference of Jew and Greek from disuse in modern political theory. By itself, however, that will hardly suffice. If modern political thought does indeed move within the "horizon of peace" of which Derrida speaks, we would be foolhardy to expect the difference to reveal itself at a glance. Jewish and Greek modes of thought are not "entirely discrete functions that can be neatly peeled apart for inspection--apparently, like the different colored strands of electrical wiring."[4] Especially for a thinker like Marx, who stands in ambiguous relation <u>both</u> to Judaism and to Greek philosophy, the illusory unity that philosophical language forges out of the two traditions becomes an inescapable feature of linguistic reality. The identity of the two sets limits to what a thinker can say, write, or even

think, if s/he means to be intelligible. So, in an entirely unexpected way, "Theory itself becomes a material force" (as Marx puts it).[5] The theoretical practice of collapsing Jewish assumptions about reality into Greek ontology insures that Marx, writing as a theorist, will exhibit neither in any unalloyed form. We would be mistaken to look for pure samples.

How, then, can we go about inquiring into the affinities between Marx;s ontology and traditional Jewish thought, if comparing them directly is only a first step? I propose we use the special hermeneutic style characterized earlier as a non-"Marxist" reading of Marx: to seek out gaps, discrepancies, rough spots, incipient contradictions in Marx's ontology and to read through and beyond them to understand what that thought now means.

In the following discussion, we shall be concerned with the incapacity of more orthodox readers of Marx, grounding themselves in the Greco-Christian tradition, to reach all of the complexities of the real that Marx either displays or presupposes. Where they fall short, we will investigate whether placing Marx's theory in the context of Jewish thought gives a more satisfying account.

We can employ the method of interpreting the gaps in Marx's writings that a Greek-oriented reading leaves unnoticed even if we suspect that the first one to

promulgate such a reading was Marx himself. The philosophy of writing we identified earlier as Marx's does not allow him the luxury of being the final arbiter of his own meaning. Respectfully, we may dispute his self-interpretation. Indeed, respect may demand that we do so. If, in the process of searching out the hidden implications of his understanding of reality, we find affinities with Jewish thought, refracted though they may be, we will then have reason to question Marx's inattention to the relation between Judaism and his own thinking. From examining the interstices of his writing, we would then turn to probing the curious absences in his life and thought, adding another, less obvious dimension to the Jewish question about Marx.

Let us turn first, though, to exploring exactly how Jewish and Greek thought diverge, and where they lead.

II

> Life and death are in the power of the tongue.
> --Babylonian Talmud[6]

> In language there lies a petrified philosophy.
> --philologist Max Mueller[7]

The disjunction between "Greek" and "Hebrew" modes of thought has been recognized in the West for centuries. Matthew Arnold, in a famous essay, declared, "Hebraism and Hellenism--between these two points of influence moves our

world."[8] In the earlier part of this century, with his magisterial Israel: Its Life and Culture, Johannes Pedersen devoted four volumes to a historical examination which presumes and reinforces this contrast.[9] The classic exposition, however, arrives with Thorlief Boman's Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek. Despite severe criticism, some of it justified, this work remains the indispensable starting point for discussion of Jewish and Greek thinking. Therefore, we will go into it in some detail.

Boman sees the contrast between Hebrew and Greek thought as fundamental. As he conceives it, "What in each of the two peoples remained identical with itself during the people's entire mental-spiritual history was more essential than the later alterations and transformations."[10] Although he recognizes the different complexions each tradition can wear (Aristotle and Homer, or Exodus and Ecclesiastes), he affirms that each possesses an underlying unity. For Boman, the Greek conception of the world reaches its fullest expression in the works of Plato, so that he treats Aristotle, for instance, primarily as a later Platonist.[11] Similarly, the thought structure of the Hebrew bible, as he interprets it, regulates his concept of Hebrew thought in general. He thus constructs an antithesis which, he says, "is already there, but it

does not lie in any [one] word or in a circumscribed viewpoint; yet it extends throughout the whole to every detail."[12]

The opposition between Hebrew and Greek, moreover, applies not only to thought, but to feeling and judgment. Interesting, in light of our earlier finding that "rudeness" made the emancipation of the European Jews impractical is Boman's following observation:

> From [its own] viewpoint Greek mental activity appears harmonious, prudent, moderate, and peaceful; to the person to whom the Greek kind of thinking occurs plainly as ideal, Hebrew thinking and its manners of expression appear exaggerated, immoderate, discordant, and in bad taste.[13]

What divides these two great cultural styles so sharply? In the first place, it is their ontology, in the strict sense of "notion of being." Boman describes Greek ontology as static--or, in its own terms, harmonious. What really is, for the Greeks, always is.

> All being is therefore at rest and in harmony, and all higher being is unalterable and indestructible; there is also a certain order of rank among all existing things. The more original a thing is, the more <u>being</u> it has and the higher is its dignity.[14]

Examples spring to mind of how Greek philosophers constantly presume that what changes or passes away is not as real, true, or good as what remains fixed and unmoving. In the <u>Timaeus</u>, Plato assigns the creation of the world to a lesser divinity, or demiurge, carefully keeping the ultimate persona of his god above the process, as if

action and material substance were media too gross for the highest reality.[15] In the Symposium, he discusses how human love can become divine by ascending gradually from the incidental beauty of an individual to the idea of beauty itself, which never alters.[16] The whole Platonic doctrine of the forms emphasizes that true being manifests itself only imperfectly, as shadows on the walls of a dimly-lit cave, as long as it must inhabit physical bodies. Bodies age and decay, matter crumbles, but reality is eternal.

Aristotle's teleology, or doctrine of final ends, stretches the "order of rank among all existing things" over time, so that any being in his philosophy may eventually reach the peculiar excellence of which it is capable. In addition, the idea of a telos--as opposed to that of an eidos, or form--lifts some of the stigma of mortality from bodily human existence. The notion of teleological development allows for the human life-cycle; it even sets a value on growth and change, as long as they conduce to the final end. In light of this, Western theory has celebrated Plato as the philosopher of being and Aristotle as the philosopher of becoming.

On Boman's view and by comparison with Hebrew thought, however, Aristotle's conception hardly seems such a great departure. Plato's "forms" set a standard for the good

life which is given before any and all attempts to live it. Aristotle's "ends" and "excellences" do the same. Neither thinker permits human beings to determine (or take part in determining) our own goals: we are only to discover them and to embody them, as far as we are able. In this manner, Boman implies, Aristotle's ontology, like Plato's, rests on the disposition to regard reality and the human role within it as essentially fixed.[17] Very consistently, therefore, Aristotle reserves his highest ethical rung for the followers of the contemplative life, who fix their attention on the immutable truths the universe displays for the edification of human reason.[18] In the Greek tradition, spiritual realities befit the concern of the most noble persons, and the saintliest souls are those who devote their lives to those things they cannot change.

For the Hebrew thinker of biblical times, in contrast, reality is dynamic and constantly in motion. Boman states: "Motionless and fixed being is for the Hebrews a nonentity; it does not exist for them."[19] To illustrate this proposition, he points to various peculiarities of the way that verbs function in the Hebrew language. For example, the verb root sheket can translate into English both as "to be silent" and "to become silent." Neither, Boman argues, really fits the character of the verb as "a conscious, willfull activity": "to hush," with its studied ambiguity

over who is hushing whom, is the best the language can do.[20] "It is really more correct to say that we are dealing here neither with a 'being' nor a 'becoming' but with a dynamic third possibility, therefore more an 'effecting'."[21]

This third possibility, in which the distinction between being and becoming is "experienced...as a unity," is the touchstone of Hebrew thought as Boman outlies it.[22] What is, to the Hebrew mind, is not always the same: it moves, it changes, it acts and responds to action. "To be" and "to become" are the same word in Hebrew, and that word, hayah, is "a true verb with full verbal force."[23] Through countless examples, Boman demonstrates that hayah virtually always means action--the producing of an effect. Consequently, the idea of ontology as "study of being" misleads us when we examine that which is real to Hebrew thought. In biblical usage, in so far as "being" is something real, it is also "becoming," while being as distinct from becoming hardly seems real at all.

Boman provides a further example of the dynamism of biblical Hebrew: its verb tenses. Modern Hebrew follows the pattern English speakers know best. It divides all actions into past, present, and future. The bible, however, knows but two tenses: perfect and imperfect. The first designates action which has reached its completion;

the second refers to action the effects of which are "still in process of coming and becoming."[24]

Just as Hebrew thought treats continuity and change as one, similarly, Boman understands it to consider actions together with their lived consequences. As long as a deed continues to make its influence felt on the course of current events, it is present and incomplete. Thus, the structure of Hebrew verb tenses moves the Hebraically-minded thinker to think of reality as somehow still unformed and pliable, yet capable of imposing an obligation to act. Reality may even manifest itself most strikingly where it is most incomplete, since that is where action is most demanded.

Not surprisingly, then--even if it deviates from the practice common to Greek and most European languages--Hebrew tenses operate "from the standpoint of an experiencing person," be that person human or divine.[25] Whether an action has reached its fullness does not depend on the essential qualities of the activity, nor on the detached judgment of some hypothetical observer. Rather, it is determined by how the act resonates in the life of someone caught up in the process which it sets into motion. Therefore, it is entirely possible for different people to view the same situation as ended or not yet complete,

depending on their relation to it and their motive for categorizing it.

The dynamic-static distinction Boman draws between Hebrew and Greek thus separates two opposed ways of looking at reality: one which calls movement, action, and change primary and includes "mere being" as a moment in the process of becoming, versus one which privileges balance and immutability and which regards true being as eternal. Now, this fundamental disagreement plays itself out over a number of other related areas. First: according to Boman, Greeks and Hebrews differ over the right way to conceptualize space and time.

> For us [sic] space is like a great container that stores, arranges, and holds everything together; space is also the place where we can live, breathe, and expand freely. Time played a similar role for the Hebrews.[26]

Is Boman perhaps waxing overly poetic here? Obviously, the ancient Hebrew like anyone else occupied three dimensions in space, lived in them, and traveled through them. What he really means to show is that Hebrew thought identifies time with the events it contains, while Greek thinking, in order to come to grips with time at all, must express it in terms of space. Consider the time-line, a conceptual device that maps our complex and often confused sense of time's passage onto the physical distance between one point and another. Boman traces the origin of this spatial

metaphor to Plato's definition of time as "a moving image of eternity" and Aristotle's insistence that temporal existence is represented best "by the image of movement along a line."[27] A line is infinitely thin, because each of its points occupies no area. It also stretches on to infinity in both directions simply by juxtaposing points; it never relates them one to the next, nor melds them into any larger entity. They remain discrete. What matters for this conceptualization is not what kind of time one passes but simply how much. Amounts of time, in turn, come to be gauged according to the language of distance, by how far one "point in time" lies from another.

In constrast to this formal and quantitative approach to time, Boman explains, "The Israelites understood time as something qualitative, because for them time is determined by its content."[28] Instead of attempting to stand apart from events and watch them shuffle by a fixed point marked "the present," Hebrew thought anchors its conception of time to the interests of the person experiencing the action. Events mark time's passage, engraving specific moments in memory. Of course, biblical Hebrew can still tell noon from midnight, or one year from another. Far more important, though, are the expressions which do not merely define a period for us but actually acquaint us with it: "wartime, peacetime, hard times, time

of mourning, feast time, favourable time..." Furthermore, biblical Hebrew discerns an intrinsic connection between times and activities, as in the famous verse from Ecclesiastes, "To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die..."[29] The purpose of particular moments come to relate them to each other, so that time is mediated through the life experience of societies and individuals.

Because Hebrew thought perceives different occasions as internally related rather than as mere "points in time," Boman believes it immensely advances "the capacity for experiencing contemporaneity."[30] Historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi has observed that up until the modern era, Jews hardly relied at all on the writing of history to preserve group memories. Instead, in evocative ceremonies like the Passover Seder, "Both the language and the gesture are designed to spur, not so much a leap of memory as a fusion of past and present. Memory here is no longer recollection, which still preserves a sense of distance, but reactualization."[31] In a similar vein, Boman claims that biblical Hebrew usages facilitate "the feeling of contemporaneity... when the psychical content of two periods of time appears identical."[32] He emphasizes, however, that this capacity does not imply an objective pattern of repetition or

recurrence in history. Indeed, what links different historical moments in the Hebraic mind is their import for the fulfillment of divine commands. Just as individual and social purposes organize the human sense of time in everyday life, so does Boman think God's purposes as they understand them structure the Hebrews' understanding of history. "Hence in the framework of Hebrew piety eschatology is just as necessary a conclusion as immutable eternity is for the Greeks who think religiously."[33]

From his stress on the Hebrew regard for time's content (as versus its formal quantification), one might think that Boman would go on to suggest that Greek is to form as Hebrew is to content. He does come perilously close to such a broad equation. Looking closer, though, what he is really arguing is that whereas Greek thinkers make much of the dichotomy between form and content, or form and matter, the writers of the Hebrew bible minimize the difference. Neither form nor content interests them by itself, and empty formality, in particular, counts as less real in their thinking. How can this be? Is it possible for an intellectual culture to survive without making formal distinctions?

Boman never denies that Hebrew thought can devise classes with which to group objects at a higher level of

abstraction. He does maintain that Hebraically-minded thinkers arrive at abstractions by a very different route than those Western philosophers usually take and that formal definition need not lie along its way.

> When we [sic] draw a tree-trunk, we first of all draw the outline with two vertical lines; we believe that we can even see the contour. We are really in error, however, for when we go up to the tree and go around it, we can see only bark and wood, but no kind of strokes, lines, or contours. Thus, these are only auxiliary lines which we introduce voluntarily into what we see in order to make a representation of the visual impression...According to certain techniques we can suppress our natural tendency and see, draw, and paint the object without contours. This is precisely what the Israelites do by nature.[34]

The correctness of Boman's art theory is not at issue here. His point is evident: drawing lines around reality may not finally depict it any more clearly. Instead, we may strive to view the form of an object and its matter as coextensive. Thus, in Hebrew a boundary, for example, is not a line of demarcation, a "thus far and no further," but rather a natural landmark, such as a hill or tree, that actually belongs to the area it bounds. As with territory, so with ideas. Boman notes that the word "definition" comes from the Latin findo, or "split": If a piece of wood is split into two parts and they are put back together, there is a boundary line between the two pieces, a line which takes up no space." So, too, Greek thinkers abstract from matter to create abstract repre-

sentations which, unlike real objects, can be defined by drawing boundaries. "It is in such acts as these that Greek, Indo-European logical thinking consists."[35]

Hebrew thinking, by the same token, is like perception without auxiliary lines: at its sharpest at the center of its field of vision, it "diminishes in clarity in all directions until it ends in imperceptibility."[36] To "define" something in this mode is to progress from its clear, paradoxically definitive center in one's own experience of it toward the fringes of one's relation to it.

If Hebrew thinking does refuse to separate form and content, then one might expect three other disagreements between Hebrew and Greek thought: on the relation between thought and thing, on that of word and deed, and on the nature of truth. Boman does, in fact, find evidence of such disagreements. On the one hand, to the Greek mind, "The thing is a means of knowing. The one who seeks to know is not attempting to alter something or other in his [sic] environment, but he is trying only to observe how it really is."[37] To reflect on true being is to partake of the divine: indeed, "The standpoint of the spectator is already divine in itself."[38] To the Hebrew, however, "Things have a meaning; they are symbols given in nature."[39] A Hebrew thinker would fail utterly to comprehend Goethe's epigram, "All that is transitory is

only a symbol," because seeking to find a guide to action in the fleeting events of live is paying attention to precisely what is real, from the biblical standpoint.[40]

Likewise, where the Greek philosophers complain of the inadequacy of language, to the Hebrew thinker true speech is synonymous with effective reality. One term, davar, covers the meanings thing, word, and matter. "A lie for the Hebrews is not as it is for us [sic] a non-agreement with the truth...For him [sic], the lie is the internal decay and destruction of the word."[41] Language has power, and truth is the word's result in action. "That which is powerless, empty, and vain is a lie: a spring which gives no water lies."[42] Hebrew thought accordingly seeks truth in trustworthy relations between actors in the temporal and material world, while Greek thought looks for truth in valid perceptions of the eternal, spiritual reality.

The distinction could not be more clear--but it must become much more precise before we can inquire where, in its terms, the thinking of Karl Marx stands.

III

Boman's comparison of Hebrew and Greek thought makes very strong claims, and it has drawn criticism of equal intensity. Linguist James Barr attacks, not the "thought

contrast" itself, but the semantic method supporting it on three main grounds. First, he argues, Boman's survey of Hebrew and Greek is unsystematic. Boman fails to examine either language "as a whole," uses terms like static and dynamic absolutely instead of along a continuum with other languages, and makes his comparisons along dimensions that would produce nonsensical results if applied to ancient Egyptian or modern German, for example.[43]

Second, Barr raises serious doubts about whether language and thought directly correlate, as Boman constantly presumes. ("Boman's habit of contrasting Hebrew language with its alleged implications with Greek thought and not in the first place with Greek linguistic structure" only obscures the issue further.)[44] Barr warns of "the danger of taking a sense of a word along with its context and suggesting that the significance which is given through associations of the context is in fact the indicator value of the word."[45] That danger, he contends, is the confusion of end use and meaning. To use language at all, people must structure their utterances according to "linguistic form and type," which may have nothing to do with "distinctions in the actual objects." Grammatical gender, for instance--the rules by which various languages determine at what points to assign a gender to objects, or to maintain a correspondence between gender and sex--"is a

prime example of a linguistic structure which cannot be taken to reflect a thought problem."[46] Not all particularities of a language tell us anything about the way the speakers of that language think. Barr explains:

> Even on the most general theoretical level, if a relation is assumed to exist between the mental pattern of a certain linguistic group and the structure of their language, one would have the choice of at least the following simple relations: a) that the mental pattern is determined by the linguistic structure; b) that the linguistic structure is determined by the mental pattern; c) that they are in some way reciprocally interactive. Under c) can perhaps be added the further alternative d) that the interaction is not constant and uniform, but occurs only haphazardly and at certain points and therefore for reasons and circumstances which have to be separately determined in each case.[47]

Third, Barr attributes to Boman a vested interest in the Hebrew-Greek distinction arising out of the desire to prove "the uniqueness of Christianity." Scholars grouped under the rubric of biblical theology make much of the fact that Christianity tries to combine Hebrew and Greek thinking, an apparently impossible task. They therefore try to show that Christianity "belongs with Jewish thought as a roughly homogeneous entity clearly set apart from the other currents of European thought."[48] This preconceived notion heightens the reader's awareness of any linguistic feature which seems to make Hebrew thought more idiosyncratic, at the same time classifying evidence which does not bear on the issue as neutral.[49]

Barr's criticisms and cautions serve the useful purpose of alerting us to those instances where Boman's enthusiasm for his subject carries him away.[50] For many of these excesses, we can find an explanation in Boman's very Greek approach to distinguishing Greek from Hebrew thought. When Boman opposes the two modes, he draws lines of demarcation between them, "defining" them by mutual exclusion after the fashion he calls in others "Indo-European logical thinking."[51] By taking the identifying marks as the modes themselves, he reinvents Hebrew and Greek as abstract types. He can then see the examples he cites as the matter that embodies the formal categories, and this makes easy the over-interpretation of which Barr complains.

Beyond that, Boman's typology fails to allow for historical change. His concepts "Hebrew" and "Greek" reside in some timeless and universal dimension of thought, as in reality languages can only do once they are dead. This atemporal perspective inclines Boman to locate his comparison of the two modes within a world of ideas and thinkers in which Hebrew and Greek exist as opposing essences, always have, and always will, even (one suspects) if there had never been any Jews or Greeks to instantiate them. Consequently, he lays himself open to Barr's methodological reproach.

Whereas Boman overestimates his ability to think Hebraically, Barr makes no effort at all in that direction. For him, whether or not Greek thought differs from its Hebrew counterpart is a question that can only be settled through Greek-like processes of definition and exclusion. To Barr, for instance, the meaning of a word properly consists of its "indicator value," a kind of Platonic ideal of the word that transcends any particular context in which it might visibly appear. The Hebraic suggestion that proper meaning might actually be constituted by context would seem to him absurd. Barr, therefore, stands in the uncomfortable position of Alice beyond the looking-glass, in the Red Queen's garden.

> "When you say 'hill,'" the Queen interrupted, "I could show you hills, in comparison with which you'd call that a valley."
>
> "No, I shouldn't," said Alice, surprised into contradicting her at last: "a hill can't be a valley, you know. That would be nonsense--"
>
> The Red Queen shook her head. "You may call it 'nonsense' if you like," she said, "but I've heard nonsense, compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary!"[52]

The Red Queen, infuriating though she may be, has it exactly right. To a mind which, like Barr's, conceives truth as never varying regardless of persons, a hill cannot be a valley, and the dictionary is the final arbiter of meaning.[53] No wonder he thinks the Hebrew-Greek distinction "over-dramatized."

How, though, could we go about reading Boman's argument so as to correct its bias and complete his intended project? At his most precise, Boman recognizes that when he says "Greek," he mainly indicates the philosophical writings of Plato, and "Hebrew," similarly, stands for the pattern of thought evident in the Hebrew bible. Thus, he is actually dealing, not with languages, but with texts. "Boman's analysis of the Hebrew mind, however, does not at all touch upon the concept of the text itself and the Jewish relation to it," as Susan Handelman rightly remarks.[54] In order to raise the question of how "Hebrew thought" enters into the thought processes of an ambivalent Jew like Karl Marx, then, it seems we must open up the typology in three dimensions. "Hebrew" will descend into the material world and become "Jewish." "Thought" will travel through time and come out as "tradition." Finally, "textuality" will emerge from between the lines--those auxiliary lines that Boman forgot to erase--to take on weight and substance and a specifically Jewish coloration.[55] For, as Handelman intimates, it makes all the difference that the text we are scrutinizing is the Torah and that the tradition of reading through which we will seek the meaning of the text is the Jewish tradition. As one bible scholar observes, "For the Jewish tradition, reading is more than reading: it is a love affair with the text."[56]

IV

The Torah is the name Jews apply to the five books of Moses, or Pentateuch, and in a broader sense to the entire set of nearly three dozen books that make up the Hebrew bible, from Genesis to Chronicles. These writings have been the constant source of Jewish culture. Every week in synagogue for the last two thousand years, observant Jews have heard a portion of the Torah read aloud in Hebrew. The portions fall in a cycle that completes the five books and begins again annually. All other Jewish writings comment on the Torah in one way or another. Indeed, in its broadest sweep, the name "Torah" encompasses all the prophetic writings, legal interpretations, guides to daily conduct, poems, legends, folktales, and mystic doctrines that ever have elaborated on the text, as well as those that have not yet been uttered but will be in the future. Torah, therefore, is not only text but interpretive process, too--better, it is text understood as process. For the religious Jew, Torah summarizes the history of the Jewish tradition: because every generation studies it, the text and its readings to a considerable degree, constitute the Jewish experience.[57] According to poet and translator Joel Rosenberg, the books of the Hebrew bible

> generated a cultural legacy, and the cultural experience they embody and the literary modes they employ are familiar to the Western thinker partly

> because this reader has learned to read, to some extent, with its eyes.[58]

Because each successive generation learns the Torah all over again, the meanings that its Hebrew words acquire by association with their biblical contexts become part of the social meaning of the words within Hebrew-speaking or Jewish cultures. The literary art that has gone into the composing of Torah imbues its turns of the phrase with a certain way of understanding reality, and study reproduces that understanding in one wave of readers after another. The text also employs an especially effective device for constructing lasting sets of shared meanings: a system of leitworter, or "key-words," plays a large part in the Torah's narrative strategy. Shakespeare critic Bruce Kawin shows how in King Lear key-words port "the meaning they have acquired with them into their present and future contexts, immensely complicating and inter-relating the concerns and actions of the play."[59] So also with the Torah. Just as the imperfect tense of the Hebrew language leaves an action hovering in the air until its effect is no longer felt, so the use of key-words in the Torah also calls the reader to attend to hidden influences and consequences.

When a text uses words in this fashion, they gain an importance over and above their narrow linguistic meaning. To understand truly what view of reality the Torah provides,

therefore, we must reunite our care for the ontological implications of the Hebrew language with our attention to biblical content. We must ask what we can learn about the Jewish sense of the world from the plot, characters, and themes of the biblical story.[60]

At first, though, we might wonder whether we can discern any coherent philosophy in such a multivocal body of work as the Torah. Rosenberg, for instance, warns against too "ideological" a reading.

> Given the enormous variety of subjects and literary forms in the Bible, and the long span of time in which the Hebrew Bible as we now know it coalesced, it is impossible to state the message of biblical narrative.[61]

The best summary of biblical narrative, he explains, is the narrative itself. The Torah already uses an extremely compact, highly allusive style, at some points bordering on the cryptic. If we attempt to soak the distinctive hue out of the warp of its fabric, we risk dissolving the threads altogether--a risk inherent in any attempt to draw a moral from a piece of literature, but immeasurably sharper in biblical exegesis. Nevertheless, the same author concludes, with great care, "It is possible to speak of 'preoccupations' in biblical narrative, and as such to determine what the narrative is saying." The Torah recurs repeatedly to some themes while yet others seem to influence the story throughout, so that without

them, the text would be unimaginable. It is entirely legitimate to spell out these central themes and vitally necessary to do so if we wish to understand how Jewish structures of thought differ from the Western norm, and in what relation Karl Marx stands to each.

The touchstone of reality in the Torah is the active dialogue between God and humankind. By "dialogue" we must understand, first, actual conversation between two parties. In the storytelling style of the Torah, dialogue predominates. Where the text could have related events in its own voice, it most often makes its characters recount them instead, even if that leaves the narrator only to summarize or confirm assertions already made or just about to be made in speech. The Torah relies on dialogue rather than description in order to characterize the actors in its dramas. What individuals say or fail to say, and when, and how, tells us who they are. Dialogue also suspends the progress of events and allows for extended scenes of tension and dramatic irony: one need only look to Abraham's words to Isaac as they ascend Mount Moriah or the discourse of Joseph and his brothers in Egypt for examples.[62] Even poetry, that most individual form of expression to the modern way of thinking, speaks in the Torah "as the end result of dialogue."

> As one composing "traditional" poetry, the poet participates in, and is in constant dialogue with, a literary tradition from which he [sic] draws and to which he adds. Thus he never quite composes alone. His audience, as bearers of tradition, constitutes his collaborator, who interacts with the poet by bringing to his words definite expectations that lend them both shape and substance.[63]

In short, "Everything in the biblical world ultimately gravitates toward dialogue," as Robert Alter puts it--and for good reason. "To the ancient Hebrew writers, speech seemed the essential human faculty: by exercising the capacity of speech man sic demonstrated, however imperfectly, that he was made in the image of God."[64]

Beyond actual speech, though, dialogue means the inescapable relatedness of persons which is what makes communication between them possible, desirable, and urgent. Martin Buber, who gave the world the concept of an "I-thou" relationship, calls dialogue "this dramatic over-against-ness of God and man sic , on which the faith of Israel is grounded."[65] Already in the Talmudic period, poring over the biblical text, the rabbis had asked the question: Why did God create the world? They answered: because God was lonely. So the divine Person created human persons, and so the story which the bible tells begins.

The dialogical situation comes about "because God's purposes are always entrammelled in history, dependent on the acts of individual men and women for their continuing

realization." Since the creation, in the Jewish view, it is "human individuality" which has become "the biblical God's chosen medium for his experiments with Israel and history."[66]

Within the Torah, human beings are first and foremost persons in dialogue with the divine. That communication is what makes us ourselves, shaping our identities from the core. The relation of dialogue holds good for all human beings. If the Torah concentrates on the story of the Jews, that is because, for the divine experiment as the text tells of it, they form a sort of laboratory sample in relationships. If this stiff-necked people can learn to love and be loved by God, the story intimates, then there is hope for everyone else as well.

As a way of engaging the universe, though, dialogue implies several orientations which seem astounding next to any Greek-like model of ontology. The Torah demands of its readers that they seek to know God, not as an eternal set of esoteric truths, but as a distinct personality who speaks and wills, acts and interacts, and to whom they are already committed for life, like a parent or a spouse. The Torah is relatively lacking in theology preceisely because the question of what God <u>is</u> lacks interest to the Jewish tradition. Only things merely <u>are</u>, if even they, and God is not a thing. The Torah tries to evoke a sense of what God

wants, and any aspect of God that does not bear on our personal acquaintance and history together is pushed to the periphery of its attention. Being human, we think in human terms. Very well: "The Torah speaks in human language," as one rabbinic dictum puts it.[67] It presents God as someone enough like ourselves that consulting our own experience of what people are like will give us a clear enough sense of what the divine Person is like, and how to deal with God.

But then, what is a person, in the world the biblical story presents? Boman had already remarked, "The person is an active being who is perpetually engaged in becoming and yet remains identical with himself" [sic].[68] In language reflecting a dialogical grasp of reality, we might rephrase it: People become who they are in the process of relating to others who are also changing and growing over a period of time.

Now, this does not sound at first like a particularly Jewish idea. Aristotle, in his Ethics, writes of how one's friends crucially affect the development of one's character for good or ill.[69] In his analysis, however, one person causes changes in another in a predictable, almost mechanical way. Even if the person influenced influences the first person in return, the effects all take place within each individual soul. Moreover, by a certain age,

Aristotle believes, the gears of personality have locked into place: one is what one is going to be. The model of dialogue, on the other hand, presumes that both partners will open themselves to respond and readjust to each other throughout life. Each person will certainly change; it is the relation that will continue. There is also a further difference.

> Cognate with the biblical understanding of individual character as something which develops in and is transformed by time...is a sense of character as a center of surprise. This unpredictable and changing nature of character is one reason why biblical personages cannot have fixed Homeric epithets (Jacob is not "wily Jacob," Moses is not "sagacious Moses") but only relational epithets determined by the strategic requirements of the immediate context: Michal, as the circumstances vary, is either "daughter of Saul" or "wife of David."[70]

If God, the creator and origin of meaning in the universe, is conceived in the Torah as a person and therefore as an essentially relational self who changes as we, God's partners, do--if God, too, is a "center of surprise"--then relating to God and participating in the divine purpose must be radically unlike gaining knowledge of the cosmos and contributing to the achievement of a telos. Both surely imply a degree of aim and intention; both demand movement in a predetermined direction. Teleological development, though, aims at a fixed goal which human beings can only discover, not shape, while partnership

with God allows for discussion, revision, disagreement and reconciliation.

Teleology hinges on epistemology. One can only succeed at reaching one's highest state if one can correctly ascertain that in which it consists and those intermediate steps one must take to arrive there. For the dialogical relation, though, the best parallel is probably a good marriage. The lovers, over time, learn each other intimately, even if they only learn certain important facts about each other after many years, or never. They know the important things--what makes the loved one happy, depressed, nervous, serene, comfortable, irritated, frightened, secure --in a rudimentary way from the beginning, or nearly the beginning. What they discover is the range of one another's reactions, not the rules of them. Day by day, they take note of the changes in each other's lives and work to meet them together. At times, unavoidably, one or the other will become withdrawn, fall out of synch; their commitment to what they share carries them through. On the basis of trust, without needing or seeking perfect knowledge, they create a small world that shelters them both.

The dialogue which the Torah records between God and the Jewish people (and potentially between God and all humanity) aspires to exactly this kind of marriage for the renewal of the larger world. As Buber puts it:

> The real communion of man [sic] with God not only has its place in the world, but also its subject. God speaks to man in the things and beings that He sends him in life; man answers in relation to just these things and beings.[71]

One final lesson the Torah teaches us about the Jewish sense of reality, we must not overlook. In the biblical story, human action is undertaken freely even though God has purposes which only human beings can work out. "Put most simply," says Rosenberg, "persons are free to act as they will, but their actions are fateful."[72] By creating the world in a fit of loneliness, the God of the Torah has voluntarily become dependent on the notoriously perverse and inconsistent powers of human will and action. As compared to Greek myth (in which mortals and gods alike await the designs of Fate), Greek philosophy (in which the universe allows for excellence but neither promotes nor needs it), and those elements of Christianity that stress predestination, original sin, and undeserved divine grace, the Jewish themes of dialogue and partnership in creation mean that people and their actions matter. That sense of the cosmic importance of human action is a thread that leads us straight into the Marxian labyrinth.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

GREEK AND HEBREW IN MARX'S ONTOLOGY

When we examine the body of Marx's writings, we find (in works as dissimilar as The German Ideology and his doctoral dissertation) hints that Marx himself recognizes a Jewish-Greek distinction among views on the nature of reality.

As regards Greek thought and culture, we do not have to look very far to discover what importance Marx attaches to them. For nearly ten years, from 1837 to 1846, classical Greece figures prominently in Marx's writing. Unlike his contemporaries, though, Marx treats Greece as a cautionary example. He dissents from " the admiration, even worship for classical Greece" which had buoyed German literature in the late 18th century and which still left its traces on Hegel.[1]

Marx regards the Greek city-state, or polis, as an attempt at freedom that failed. The lesson he draws from its collapse is that trying to reunite the worlds of thought and action by means of philosophy alone is futile. Philosophy inevitably raises up some partial, one-sided view of reality to the level of Truth, suppressing other equally compelling perspectives. Thus, Greece in Marx's vocabulary stands for a typically "Greek" bias in

thinking, according to the model of Greek thought we encountered in the last chapter. By the same token, when Marx criticizes the Greek approach, his critique seems to arise from something distinctly resembling a Jewish point of view on what can plausibly be called real.

For many of the German Romantic thinkers of the late 1700's, according to Charles Taylor, the ancient Greeks presented an inspiring portrait of

> a mode of life in which the highest in man sic , his aspiration to form and expression and clarity was at one with his nature and all of nature. It was an era of unity and harmony within man, in which thought and feeling, morality and sensibility were one, in which the form which man stamped on his life whether moral, political or spiritual flowed from his own natural being, and was not imposed on it by the force of raw will.[2]

Hegel, the "gigantic thinker" of Marx's young adulthood, offered a more nuanced but scarcely less laudatory version.[3] Like the Romantics, he saw the polis as both the realization of the human essence and its most adequate expression to date. At its height, he theorized, being and thought did not conflict in classical Greece, nor did the individual and the community. Citizens knew their place in the natural and the political order and acted in keeping with that knowledge. Human beings related to the polis in which they lived, and its ideals, as particulars to a universal: they lived as instances of the state, and its existence embodied itself in theirs. They enjoyed

freedom, not in unrestraint, but in the achievement of the virtues praised by the ethos of their community. Political life, in Hegel's picture of Greek culture, supplied the definition of those virtues, and hence, the preconditions for human freedom.

This happy unity as envisioned did contain a fatal flaw, however: its parochiality. Hegel argued that the integrity of any Greek city-state was not really universal but only (in Taylor's words) "the spirit of a people, one among many."[4] In addition, its cohesiveness was achieved at the expense of reflection. Most citizens knew only one way of life: their own.

In time, some deeply spiritual individuals, most notoriously Socrates, would rebel, seeking a larger unity in a consciousness too broad for any one polis. As single human beings, though, they could not embody universal truths. Simply by being individual and particular, Hegel contends, they would be inadequate to the task. So, they challenged the societies in which they lived to transcend whatever limited notion of the good human life their citizens uncritically accepted. In doing so, however, these universal thinkers began a tragic struggle which sometimes destroyed them (as it did Socrates) and always fractured the unified, if one-sided, cultures that had given them birth.

Hegel celebrated the achievements of the polis and mourned its passing, but he thought of its demise as necessary for the recapture of human freedom at a higher level. In a sense, his philosophy represents a commitment to the idea of a society in which neither Socrates nor Jesus would have had to die in order for their messages to gain an audience.[5] All nations, classes, and philosophies would find a home within the complex structure of such a culture. The state he hoped for would express, and thereby reconcile, the totality of its citizens' beings, while their lives would give substance to the ideal of an expressive unity.

Marx takes over Hegel's idea of a connection between the ancient Greek republic and the ideal of unity when he "goes over to" Hegelianism in 1837, but with a dramatic difference. From the outset, Marx treats classical Greece as a failure in the pursuit of that ideal, and not as a historically limited form of its realization.

Marx's distinct viewpoint emerges most clearly in his analysis of the position of the philosopher in Greek culture. Hegel had considered the classic thinkers of Greece shoots of a living culture from which they drew their intellectual and spiritual sustenance. Their thinking, he believed, reflected their civic life. Marx draws the opposite conclusion. "The Greek philosopher is

a demiurge," he writes in a preparatory note for his dissertation. "His [sic] world is other than the one that flourishes in the natural sun of substantial existence."[6] The very idea of wisdom in Greece, according to Marx, arose from individual thinkers' reflection on their private experience, in abstraction from the life of the community. Far from exemplifying the unity of the ideal and the real in Greek communal life, these sophoi negated it by walling themselves off in a world of their own imagining and calling it "spiritual truth." In their own persons, the philosophers estranged thinking from living. They also created a realm of pure thought called philosophy and fenced it off from the public domain.

If the Greeks had ever experienced the wholeness Hegel envisioned for them, Marx dates it far earlier than the classical age, possibly even before philosophy was invented. By the time of Socrates, certainly, the "split between reason and existence reached full expression" in Greek communal life. Socrates, Marx writes, is not a victim of a society which he challenges. Rather, he embodies the inner conflicts of the polis and succumbs to them. "Divided within himself" so deeply that his own spiritual impulses seemed to him a daimon, or indwelling spirit, "condemned" to generate chimerical visions of a good that his own nation could not make material, in

Marx's judgment, Socrates went to his death in vain. His fate reveals "the relationship of Greek philosophy to Greek life and thereby its inner contraction into itself."[7]

In the main body of his dissertation, Marx frames his critique of Greek thought in a different way: by displaying how the opposition of thought and life played itself out in the lives of two lesser Greek philosophers, Epicurus and Democritus. Each of them, to Marx, represents one pole of the dilemma, and each lands himself in a web of insoluble contradictions. Epicurus, as Marx portrays him, is a dogmatic idealist. In his theory of nature, atoms--which are, in a literal sense, the basic units of reality--must tend to swerve from the paths the forces of gravity and mutual repulsion mark out for them simply to show that true being does not wholly submit to material laws. Now, the unpredictability Epicurus's view implies should have impelled him to examine the physical world in search of contingent truths. To do so, however, he would have had to concede that the ability of any individual consciousness to get at the truth depends on forces external to the individual, in the material world. But admitting that material considerations determine the reality we experience would mean denying the basic principle which, on Marx's reading, led Epicurus to hypothesize the atomic swerve in the first

place. Consequently, Marx argues, Epicurus actually neglected empirical studies and led a static, sedentary, and untroubled life.[8]

Democritus, on the other hand, is a staunch materialist. He founds his atomic theory on the assumption that atoms are law-abiding particles and that their set motions explain all that exists. As Marx takes him, though, Democritus confronts a paradox: he also believes that no natural phenomenon makes the presence of atoms observable to the human eye. The materially-based regularities never disclose themselves, while the apparent world, which the senses cannot deny, is all chaos and deception.

> Democritus, for whom the principal element does not enter appearance and remains without reality and existence, is on the other hand faced with the world of sensible perception as a real and concrete world. This world is, to be sure, subjective illusion, but just because of this, it is torn free from the principal element, left in its autonomous reality; at the same time it is the unique, the real object, and as such has value and importance.[9]

Consequently, Democritus roamed the known world, mastering a variety of sciences and accumulating endless data about the "subjective illusion" which is all the reality vouchsafed to him. Legend has it that he ended his fruitless quest for positive knowledge by blinding himself, "so that the sensible light in the eye would not darken sharpness of intellect."[10]

According to Marx's prognosis, Democritus, Epicurus, and Socrates all fail because of the same cultural bent in Greek philosophy: the belief that thought can comprehend itself in isolation from life, or, more concretely, that a thinker can discover the truth about human nature outside of his or her social relations with other human beings. This feature of Greek philosophy is also one of the major differences between Jewish and Greek thought, so it is significant that Marx uses it to indict the Greeks.

Marx also accuses modern philosophers of repeating the errors of the ancients. Once again, he charges, they pretend to be able to devise a better world without engaging the one they presently inhabit. Modern philosophy, it seems to Marx, has inherited the Greek disposition to exalt the stance of the spectator, and to choose contemplation rather than interaction as its preferred way of learning about reality. This, too, ranges Marx against the Hellenic influence from a standpoint which resembles the Jewish one. Since he groups moderns with Greeks, he passes harsh judgment on nearly all political thought.

The one great exception is Hegel. For the youthful Marx, Hegel had promised a way "to seek the ideal in the real itself," and thereby to avoid the "inner contradiction into itself which he thought had doomed Greek philosophy."[11] Up until 1841, in fact, Marx prescribed Hegel's holistic

approach as the antidote to metaphysical systems which write the philospher's consciousness large and call that reality. By 1843, of course, Marx changed his mind about the usefulness of Hegel. In the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, written two years after his dissertation and shortly before "On the Jewish Question," he accuses his former mentor with reducing the individual to "his beard and blood" [sic] and abstracting from social contexts and relations.[12]

Marx's putative break with Hegel has been much explored, but one thing that has not been widely discussed is how, in order to settle accounts with Hegel, Marx begins to read him more and more as a Greek. In the Critique just mentioned, Marx likens Hegel to Socrates. Neither, he declares, is "allowed to measure the idea by what exists; he must measure what exists by the idea."[13] In the 1844 Manuscripts, he expands on this comparison. Both Socrates and Hegel display "the opposition, within thought itself, between abstract thinking and sensuous reality or real sensuousness."[14] Where Marx had earlier honored Hegel as the philosopher of "the whole," he increasingly rereads him just another partial thinker. Like the ancients, Hegel takes his own end (defined by Marx as "constructing the hereditary monarch out of the pure Idea")[15] for the end of society. In addition, Hegel begins to resemble Epicurus. As Jerrold Seigel points out:

> With Hegel, "abstraction resolves to forsake abstraction and to have a look at nature free from abstraction." But just as Epicurus in the end merely gave objective form to his abstract thinking, so for Hegel, too...nature already existed in the thinker's mind as an image of his own activity, and "what he has really let emerge from himself is only this abstract nature, only nature as a thought-entity--but now with the significance that it is the other-being of thought..."[16]

Later, when Marx shifts his theoretical stance even further in The German Ideology, he continues to differentiate himself from former associates by pointing out the specific defects they share with the Greeks. He and Engels, for instance, deride the German "true socialists" by claiming they convert the practical program of the French party into a set of timeless truths. It is worth noting one of Marx's favorite axioms at work here: that an isolated group of thinkers will tend to propound an impossibly unconditional notion of human freedom. Thinkers of Marx's day, he asserts, follow the Greeks in inverting the real relation of being and thought, and they do so necessarily once they eternalize their own perspective in a characteristically Greek way.[17]

In short, something very like the typology of Jewish and Greek thought we discussed earlier shows up in the center of Marx's critique of German philosophy. Typically, he does not endorse the one and decry the other so much as pronounce a judgment on the effect of adopting either. Marx clearly regards the "Greek" attempt to establish the

real on a higher plane than the everyday as a mistake, a chimera, even a self-delusion. Yet even if this speculative vision of reality conformed to the facts, it would still provide no basis for the harmonious order its proponents seek to achieve. To say that all people and all activities in society contribute to an expressive unity of human existence, but that only people who are philosophers (or ordinary people only while thinking philosophically) can experience it as such, is to say that no such unity exists, by any standard Marx would accept.

As long as a society systematically excludes certain categories of people, activities, states of mind, or human experiences from its normative version of what is real, it is still parochial, abstract, and less than fully human. Therefore, Marx demands that any acceptable ontology provide for the possibility that humanity can achieve a genuine social whole (which he calls "species-being" or "human emancipation," and later "communism"). Anything less is self-defeating. Therefore, also, he is drawn to the sense of the real he associates with civil society and with the Jewish outlook. In its emphasis on human action directed toward the effective overcoming of practical human need, what he terms the "Jewish" viewpoint offers Marx a more trustworthy guide than philosophy to what

must be done. Starting from it, he believes he can realize the social wholeness of which philosophers may only dream.[18]

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II

The way of understanding reality that Marx calls Jewish fits the pattern of Jewish thought much as his notion of Greek culture fits Greek thought as a type. Turning to the Jewish side, though, we cannot see the relation unless we once again make a distinction between "sabbath" and "everyday Judaism." Marx, as we noted earlier, holds no brief for the Jewish religion, nor does he think it an important phenomenon as a religion. This judgment does not necessarily stem from ignorance, either. Often, when Marx needs a good pungent example in order to make a point, he reaches for the name of a biblical character: Moses, Joshua, the Levites, Adam, Esau, Habakkuk, and Ezekiel all pop up in his writings.[19] These references demonstrate Marx's familiarity with the bible as literature (probably attained in Gymnasium under a Lutheran teacher). Clearly, though, they have no bearing on his ontology. Any educated German of Marx's day would have read the bible along with Shakespeare and Goethe, these being regarded as the cornerstones of German culture.

Nor is there anything particularly Jewish about Marx's handling of his biblical allusions. It is of interest that Marx rarely, if ever, resorts to the Gospels or any part of the Christian canon for an illustration. His bible is strictly "Old Testament."[20] Still, one cannot make much of that. Paradoxically, then, at those moments when he touches on the content of the Jewish faith, Marx tells us virtually nothing about his relation or non-relation to Jewish thought.

Perhaps, though, Jewish thought exerts itself in Marx's theory the way that atoms do in Democritus's physics: as a "principal element [which] does not enter appearance" but which nonetheless unifies all the rest. When we look at the terms in which Marx criticizes Greek thought and think about the perspective from which they could arise, we notice that Marx could write exactly the same attacks if he were presuming a Jewish relation to reality. This observation applies all the more strongly if we remember that the outlook Marx calls "everyday Judaism" in "On the Jewish Question" resembles the paradigm of Jewish thought on every significant point. So, we could argue that Marx's critical stances, his differences with the Greeks and their modern epigones, themselves show the structural relation of his theory to Jewish thought.

In fact, though we can see the relation quite directly if we are willing to read Marx the way Marx set

about reading Epicurus. "Even with philosophers who give their work a systematic form," Marx wrote, "...the true inner structure is totally different form the form in which the philosopher consciously presents it."[21] For Marx, the key to the Epicurean philosophy was the atomic swerve; it revealed the Greek philosopher's notion of freedom. The "inner structure" of Marx's theory, which shows its affinity for Jewish thought, is his ontology. Bertell Ollman has summarized its main points.

First, Marx views the world as a system of internal relations. Nothing exists on its own, discretely, independent of all else, nor do things simply happen to come into association by external contingency or chance. Anything which is, is by virtue of its interrelation with other features of reality. In Marx's theory, things only take on a definite existence thorugh interaction. To be exact, though, we should call this play in the fabric of the universe "inneraction," since all the reciprocal effects which finally characterize any particle of reality occur within the totality of things real and not primarily between real units.[22]

For Marx, however odd it may seem, things as such do not exist. All the factors he examines, he first has to distinguish out of the whole; furthermore, for different purposes, he individuates them in different ways. It

follows that in Marx's ontology, a thing will not be defined by listing its qualities. Instead, Marx will vary which attributes he counts as pertinent to an object of his scrutiny depending on the specific set of relations in which he is locating it at the moment. Capital, for example, can just as easily mean "control of the means of production" or "control of the means of exploiting and subjecting the laborer." In Marx's full theoretical conception, of course, it means both.[23] As Ollman explains:

> Essentially, a change of focus has occurred from viewing independent factors which are related to viewing the particular way in which they are related in each factor, to grasping this tie as part of the meaning conveyed by the concept. This view does not rule out the existence of a core notion for each factor, but treats this core notion itself as a cluster of relations.[24]

When Marx actively determines which relations he will take to constitute a thing under discussion, he is only doing what he believes human beings do all the time: namely, appropriating the world. The term "appropriation" points to the special place Marx's ontology assigns to human beings. Like all the animals, species homo sapiens intrinsically belongs to the natural world. "A being which does not have its true nature outside itself," Marx proclaims, "is not a natural being and does not share in the being of nature."[25] Nature is "Man's [sic] inorganic

body." Yet human beings are not sunk into their physical environment, either. Both cognitively and actively, we grapple with nature in ways that materially change it, and ourselves as part of it. Other animals coexist with their surroundings. Human beings struggle in order in some way to make the world our own and to leave our mark upon it. The process of appropriation marks off those relations by which we will henceforth recognize the real existence of those factors that we incorporate into our own existence.

For Marx, the most characteristically human way of orienting the world, and thus of shaping it, is through labor. In merely looking at a beautiful sunset, for example, we change ourselves by heightening our sensitivity to beauty, and so, we appropriate it: it becomes a part of us. If we go on to paint the sunset, though, or picture it in words, we "capture" it in a richer, deeper way. By making the object of our sense perceptions into the object of our expression, we bring a wider range of our human capacities to bear on it. Thus, we establish a more all-round, fully human relation to the sunset and, in the process, we become more human ourselves.[26] Marx views things as the summary of relations, and therefore, he can equally well call human interaction with nature "the appropriation of the human essence."[27] Human beings only

are in relation to the world; we can only reveal what we may be by acting on objects.

What is this "human essence" of which Marx speaks? Marx denies that any fixed set of descriptions can apply to humanity in all ages and countries. (Such a stereotype is one of the items he comprehends under the label "ideology.")[28] He does assert, though, that the species as a whole possesses a definite set of shared needs. Human needs impel us to appropriate the world. "The need of a thing," writes Marx, "is the evident, irrefutable proof that the thing belongs to my being."[29] The needs we feel, he proposes, stem from the powers we possess. Human powers range from the exercise of the five senses to procreation, will, judgment, sex, love, and other varied capacities.[30] Marx declares that even the most basic faculties, such as smelling and tasting, can be employed in either an animal or a human fashion. Progress consists in part of satisfying needs in a more human manner and in part of cultivating new needs that extend our range and bring us more fully into relation with the world.

While individuals must make an effort to realize their intrinsic powers, the progress of which Marx takes most note is owing to changes at a social level. The mode in which a society produces, trying to satisfy human needs, is not subject to individual choice. The mode of produc-

tion, however, sets human beings into definite social relations, and these in turn will go a long way toward generating one's current needs. Paradoxically, how human beings conceive of their own powers will depend mainly on how the mode of production (which people themselves erect and maintain) teaches them to understand their own needs. Under capitalism especially, a social formation which people create reacts back upon them to limit their further social creativity cruelly.[31]

Carol Gould has called Marx's theory a social ontology, an "analysis of the nature of social reality by means of socially interpreted categories."[32] Most people, according to Marx, do not operate with such an analysis. Instead, they take their cues as to what they need and what they can achieve from what they observe to be possible under existing social arrangements. They are thus brought to deny the impulse to develop their human powers, those very same powers which brought them to their present pass.

> Private property has made us so stupid and partial that an object is only ours when we have it, when it exists for us as capital, or when it is directly eaten, drunk, worn, inhabited, etc., in short, utilized in some way.[33]

As Marx argues, though, when we opt for our present practical needs, people (e.g., the Jews in "On the Jewish Question") are not simply deceived. The mode of production by which we survive actually contradicts the need to

become what one needs to be. Popular consciousness accurately reflects an impossible reality. People experience the world as alien and overpowering because it has really become alienated from them and dominant over them.

Because Marx's ontology takes relational human beings, social processes, and changing human needs as its basic matter, it is simultaneously an ontology and a theory of history. Human history, in Marx's telling, shares many features with a well-recounted narrative. Its protagonist is the species; its villain is disintegrated existence. Its plot revolves around the conflict between human needs and the unsuccessful attempts to fulfill them which have become necessary to survival. If, in the famous slogan which opens the Communist Manifesto, all history is indeed "the history of class struggle," that is because each class, in accordance with its place in the mode of production, seizes on certain powers, needs, and ways of appropriating the world and fights to reorganize society so as to emancipate these particular human potentialities.[34] The purveyors of these partial solutions, even when they achieve a revolution, typically do not realize the full significance of their own actions. For Marx, though, one can only "realize" meaning--that is, make it real--through

action. He takes practice and not consciousness as the true expression of what the species has become.

The most human way to create social structures, nonetheless, is in full awareness of the needs we seek to meet, and the ways certain kinds of practice succeed better than others at that task, and (to the extent to which we can anticipate it) the transforming of human powers which will result from such practice. Marx sees the alienation of labor as a force which both prevents and demands this kind of awareness. Theory, on the other hand, aids its rise. Theorizing, then, is a part of making history, and thinking, acting human beings are the heroes of the story. To break out of the trap set by alienated laboring and to return to the free, yet directed pursuit of species-being: that is the purpose that relates one moment of history to the next.

Human needs first induce us to break up reality into units that pertain to us. Exactly in appropriating reality so divided, though, we expand the needs that have been driving us and lay claim to what we still lack. Steering by our renewed sense of need, we reinterpret our solutions. By starting from a sense of something to be done, Marx's ontology leads on to the conclusion that only by doing it can we learn what we need in order to live freely and humanly.

III

Over and over again, we find that Marx's sense of what is real escapes the confines of the Greek conception of "being." Ultimate reality to the Greeks is spiritual; to Marx, it must be rooted in material. Each real thing in Greek thought has a single essence; in Marx's view, all things are consitituted in relation to one another. Observing and contemplating the world are the highest human activities Greek thought can imagine, and theory is their expression. For Marx, though, human beings at their best strive to appropriate and transform the world, through productive practice. Consequently, Marx thinks of the realization of the world as an inherently social endeavor, unlike the Greek pursuit of truth, which is a task for individual philosophers. Also, Marx finds meaning in historical change, in contrast to the Greek view that only the eternal and the immutable truly signify.

Finally, because of the dialectical quality of human needs (that one set of needs, being fulfilled, produces a richer set), Marx cannot project a Republic, an Absolute State, or any vision of the world made whole once and for all. Human history is not approaching an ideal form, nor a telos, nor any goal given in advance and always potentially present. Instead, as Marx understands

it, we are tacking towards a goal which changes as we near it--and so do we.[35] Within the constraints of material conditions which our past actions have helped to shape, impelled by needs we ourselves have in part produced, we continually redefine the good human life we are seeking. That notion of human activity sets Marx apart, both from thinkers who give human life a predetermined end, and from those who make all ends a matter of arbitrary and individual choice.

It sets him apart, though, only if we allow it to do so. Many, probably most, of Marx's commentators look at Marx's ontology and do not recognize the dialogical shape we have traced there. Both those who speak on Marx's behalf and those against him agree that he thinks teleologically--that he is working towards an end which itself propels history to a given conclusion. Ollman, for instance, assigns communism a foundational role for Marx's philosophy. Not only does he measure everything by the standard of "after the revolution," but he insists we must understand every part of Marx's ontology in terms of its contribution to producing "communist Man" and his powers.[36] So limitless are the capacities he ascribes to this new breed, too, that he opens Marx to the charge of making people into abstractions all over again.[37] This is surely no service to Marx.

For it is precisely in reaction to this kind of "Marxism" that Taylor, for one, claims Marx's concept of freedom must be ultimately incoherent. Marx's theory, according to Taylor, can only point out any purpose for human effort as long as the ends of the theory--the creating of the conditions for human freedom--are not met. "But once the conditions are realized," he argues, "the Marxist notion of freedom is of no further help." Why is this? "The overcoming of all alienation and division leaves man [sic] without a situation"; that is, without any "predicament which sets us a certain task or calls for a certain response from us if we are to be free." Marx's theoretical end unravels itself, and so, Taylor contends, Marx's is a notion of "an utterly empty freedom."[38]

We can appreciate the force of Taylor's argument. In effect, he is arguing that Marx, despite all his efforts, has produced still too Greek a solution. At the end, it still fails to emancipate the real, individual human beings. Marx could not shrug off this thrust; it strikes at the heart of his concern and the reason for his theorizing. Moreover, he himself provides support for the indictment: in the later pages of Capital, where he speaks of expanding the realm of freedom and contracting

the realm of necessity.[39] This approach clashes harshly with his main argument that needs spur the humanizing of all human activity. The idea that we can, and should, minimize the portion of our lives devoted to need suggests that freedom consists of acting without reference to the specific powers whose exercise we care about and which have historically defined what it means to be human. This freedom certainly resembles Taylor's "situationless freedom"; it even smells of Nietzsche's "passive nihilism."[40]

Like Ollman's exaggerated defense, though, Taylor's critique takes for granted that the teleological reading of Marx is the only one we can accept. What if we choose not to do so? We have before us an alternative: the dialogical reading. As it appears in Jewish thought, dialogue has a direction; it leads somewhere we want to go. But the goal, hallowing the world, is itself a process which calls for ever freer and more purposeful dialogue. In the dialogical relation, that is to say, we can make progress and perceive that we are making progress without measuring it off against a fixed goal or telos. Similarly, Marx's theory of how people become free does not have to depend on a final smoothing out of contradictions for us to feel its emancipatory thrust. We can accept it as an interpretation without requiring any

other "proof" than its ability to capture for us our felt needs and the tasks they impose--what Marx himself might call our "situation in the present enslaved world."[41]

We might therefore read Marx's theory as a story with a plot and a climax, but no ending: only, in Taylor's terms, "a bent in things which inclines without necessitating."[42] This sort of reading would relieve us of the paradox of a freedom which dissolves once it is fully achieved. But, one might ask, what motive does this reading leave for revolution? If we are always ceaselessly pursuing the realization of our needs, only to develop new ones, why should it matter so much whether we live under capitalism or communism? Obviously, to Marx it matters enormously.

Within the paradigm of dialogue, the Jewish tradition recognizes the possibility of a condition known as exile which interrupts and distorts the I-Thou relation from which human life draws its meaning. I will compare exile to Marx's theme alienation in chapter 5, making the case that revolution in Marx's theory is structured like, and takes the place of, return from exile in the Jewish tradition. For now, let us only challenge the thesis that revolution, for Marx, must mean the creation of situationless freedom. Let us propose that it may mean the

creation of a better "predicament" from which to begin realizing human freedom, instead.

This kind of reading, a non-"Marxist" appropriation of Marx's ontology, makes room for the actual experience of historically concrete human beings to influence their decisions about how they will go about becoming free and what to do with that freedom once they enjoy it. Since one of Marx's criticisms of Greek and modern theorists is that they shut out real people and their experiences, admitting them only as "the other-being of thought,"[43] a reading of Marx which lets them in can plausibly claim to keep faith with Marx's project.

The interpretation developed here also gains credence from its affinity for the theme of partnership with God we encountered in Jewish thought. God nowhere appears as a real actor in Marx's theory. Nevertheless, in Marx as in Judaism, human beings take part in the continuous creation of the world. Human action bears a cosmic significance. People are engaged in a historic mission, and we sense a direction to our actions which seems both to respond to our wills and to something real and effective beyond ourselves. With all these points of contact, would it be surprising if Marx's sense of reality embraced one more Jewish theme: a goal which we help shape, even as we struggle to make it real?

IV

Is Marx's ontology Jewish? It is, and yet it is not. Despite his remarks about "the negation of Judaism" as a starting point, Marx does not select the Jews as his chosen people. The history he finds meaningful is economic, political, cultural, but not religious and not Torah. God disappears from Marx: what stands in dialogue with human need is a complex of "Nature" and "Man," or the physical environment and the way human beings have worked and are continuing to work on it. Nature and past human actions compose the human situation. They set the conditions and provide the impulse and the raw materials for fulfilling human needs. All needs are human, though. There are no others.

Marx thus sets himself the puzzle of meeting the demands a Jewish sense of reality sets upon him while rejecting the traditional source of answers for how to do so. His is a dialogue with an exiled God. The rabbis of the Talmudic period faced a similar crisis of interpretation, and they resolved it by subjecting the Torah to a series of daring reinterpretations.[44] Marx's solution is even more difficult: he must do his exegesis on the "text" of the social fabric itself.

As a first reading, though, Marx can and does engage the special part of social practice which encapsulates the

rest: the writing of theory. As a reader of Hegel, in particular, Marx brings into profane political theory a style of hermeneutics which is and is not the same as the rabbinic mode of interpretation. Not only do his purposes spring from a refracted version of Jewish reality, but his methods do, as well.

CHAPTER FOUR

READING AND WRITING MARX

Readers who have followed the story of the Jewish question about Marx up to this point may now be wondering why we have passed over an obvious question: namely, what about Hegel? Instead of postulating a complex and conflicted relation between Marx's theory and Jewish structures of thought, could we not trace Marx's divergences from Greek ontology to his being influenced by Hegel's philosophy?

The idea that in order to produce his own theory Marx simply inverts the Hegelian system has its origins with Marx himself. "My dialectic method," he asserts in an afterword to Capital, "is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite."

> To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of "the Idea," he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of "the Idea." With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.
>
> ...With him [the dialectic] is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.[1]

Twentieth-century writers who treat of Marx's debt to Hegel take Marx quite literally, assuming that he

inverted the idealist dialectic while retaining its basic motions. Avineri, for instance, states:

> From a systematic point of view the difference between Marx and Hegel in this respect can be reduced to Marx's rejection of the Hegelian postulate about the existence of a super-historical essence, Absolute Spirit, and to his contention that the Aufhebung [transcendence] of the antagonism has yet to occur, while Hegel thought it had already occurred.[2]

And in fact, it is possible for the theorist reading Marx to assimilate much of Marx's ontology to Hegel's dialectic. Like Marx and unlike many thinkers of his time, Hegel understands the world as constituted by tensions between opposing (or "contradictory") forces. He looks for these contradictions to produce new configurations of events and of ideas. Hegel's philosophy is dynamic (it studies reality in flux) and progressive (it "gains in richness" as it examines each era of history in turn, and it also "moves toward the realization of a final good").[3] It is therefore intrinsically temporal and historical, unlike Greek thought and like Marx's. For all these reasons, commentators have generally agreed that Marx's theory begins as a materialist critique of Hegel's idealist logic, and that wherever Hegel writes Spirit, Marx simply substitutes Man, and proceeds from there.

Since so much of Marx's thinking about the nature of reality can plausibly be read as Hegel turned right-side up, and since that reading carries the weight of a long

and venerable tradition, what gives us the effrontery to suggest an alternative? Primarily, it is the nagging sense that the accepted formula is just to neat. The transposition it demands sounds too smooth to describe the way any thinker draws on another, let alone the way that Marx reads Hegel. When Marx himself explains his compulsion to transcend his teacher, as we have already seen, he does criticize the latter's "spiritual" bent, but he also condemns Hegel's ontology because it is "Greek." It excludes certain basic aspects of human life and therefore certain persons in society from full participation in human freedom. The vision of the whole which Marx, justly or unjustly, imputes to Hegel makes truth--and consequently, freedom--accessible only from a philosophical standpoint: either to philosophers or to those who adopt a similar God's-eye viewpoint on the universe. For Marx, this is a deformed understanding of human emancipation.

Reading Marx, then, we observe him attacking Hegel on two fronts: on his casting Spirit, and not humanity, as the hero of his story, and on his willingness to exclude major elements of human life from his ideal of human freedom. At best, a reversal of Hegel would only answer the first of the two charges, leaving the second unopposed. Furthermore, these are not trivial points: they strike at the heart of Hegel's theory as Marx interprets it. Is it

at all likely that Marx had never thought of them before he read Hegel, and that the main points of his own theory occurred to him only as the "direct opposite" of the Philosophy of Right? What can Marx mean by "turning Hegel right side up again"?

In order to answer these questions, we must listen very closely to what the memorable phrase about Hegel is saying. To speak of the dialectic "standing on its head" is to employ a trope of inversion, reversal, or exchange of place. Like an hourglass in which all the sand has fallen to the bottom, the expression implies, the dialectic as it is found with Hegel can be righted, so that what had settled can be set into motion once again. Once "right side up," though, neither the structure nor the content will change. The two sides of an hourglass are identical. So, if we were to read "standing on its head" as a simple metaphor, in Marx's theory we would expect God to take the place of Man and Man of God, and all the relations between them to remain the same, although flowing toward the opposite pole from before.

This is not what happens when Marx reads Hegel, though; indeed, it is hard to imagine how it could be. In Hegel's dialectic, human beings in their finitude and morality embody a necessary moment in the process by which Spirit becomes real in the world. Although that process

reaches on beyond them, human beings are among its constituent elements. They could not be left out. For Marx, matters stand quite differently. Unlike humankind in the dialectic of Spirit, God is not essential to the development of the human species--rather, God (or the belief in God) is an obstruction to that development. Human emancipation does not incorporate religion but abolishes it, instead. It does the same to the state, thus dispensing with an institution Hegel regards as crucial to the realization of Absolute Spirit. Even culture and consciousness, the other denizens of Hegel's "realm of the spirit," take on a shadowy half-life in those parts of Marx's writings which are a critique of Hegel. It is as if Marx were so offended by Hegel's subordination of humanity to "the Idea" that he could not stand to focus on anything else in Hegel for long.

If we want to understand why Marx has to remove Spirit from the dialectic and not just reverse its place within it, we may consider a crucial presupposition of the Hegelian philosophy which Taylor describes.

> The universe has many levels because it is the unfolding of an inner necessity in external reality. The infinite end is realized in finite ends. And that is why we can see the end of Reason both as always realized and as always having to be realized. The experience of finite subjects is that the plan of reason has yet to be fulfilled. They strive towards it. But if we rise to a vision of the whole we can see that this very striving is part of the

> plan and that as a whole it is already realized. The appearance of unrealizedness is an error, a deception; and yet this deception itself is brought about by the Idea, as is the overcoming of this error by ourselves.[4]

This is a comforting conclusion. In order to arrive at it, though, Hegel has to make two further assumptions. First, there is a "vision of the whole," a privileged perspective from which "external" reality all makes sense. Second, we can know that this perspective is the true one and that the more mundane perspective which sees the world as still fragmented and incomplete is "an error, a deception." In positing a point of view which is both true and certain, Hegel aspires to what we called a few pages ago a "God's-eye view of the universe."

When Marx removes God from the dialectic, though, at the same time he rejects the God's-eye viewpoint or anything like it. "The experience of finite subjects" is all we have to go on. Denying our finitude would lead us to spin cobweb worlds out of our own heads, as Marx accuses the Greek philosophers of doing. On the other hand, denying that we are subjects in the plural and not some singular world-spirit would open the door again for some class of people falsely to proclaim itself the universal, ignoring the experience and the needs of others. So, from the beginning, the theoretical move that excludes God from the dialectic has a political bearing. If God

did not exist, Marx still would be forced to deny Him--in order to refute the godlike pretentsions of certain human beings.

By now, though, we begin to detect a pattern into which Marx's swerve away from Hegel fits. It is just the same turn Marx makes from Bauer in "On the Jewish Question" when he denies that political emancipation from religion, property, and so on, is a real liberation. Marx is also exhibiting the same penchant when he rejects the claims of the political state, "the perfected Christian state," to unify and to free society, and again when he leaves the polis and Greek philosophy behind as models for fulfilled human life and thought. In Capital, Marx returns to expand on the same progression. He reconstructs the commonplace notion of free exchange in the marketplace. He reveals by its absence what that notion leaves out: the laborer in the factory. Then, he restores the ignominies of the exploitation of labor to the picture. Suddenly, in his ironic description, market freedom seems as "spiritual," as unreal, and as irrelevant as Absolute Spirit, and Marx treats it, too, as an illusion.[5]

Marx seems constitutionally incapable of doing what he believes Hegel would like him to do: of "rising to a vision of the whole" that is achieved by making some of the parts--Jews, workers, the labor process--invisible. We can

recognize this attitude as consonant with Marx's ontology, which we have understood as sharing its key dynamics with traditional Jewish thought. Reading Marx side by side with Hegel is like comparing Hebrew with Greek--at least, if we read Hegel the way Marx does. But this brings us back to the question: how does Marx read Hegel? For, after all, Marx does purport to be performing some kind of operation on Hegel's writings. If he arrives at Jewish conclusions, that should make us all the more curious to know how he gets there from where he starts. If Marx is not standing Hegel on his feet, then what is he doing to him? And where does Jewish thinking enter into it?

We can tell what Marx is not doing. He is not saying, "Hegel is all wrong. He's too Greek. Let's dispense with him." Nor is he saying, "Hegel has corrected the faults of the Greeks: let's embrace him." Nor yet is he saying that Hegel has most of it right and only needs correction on certain points. In fact, the more we read Marx on Hegel, the more difficult it becomes to encapsulate Marx's reaction in any simple formula.

Marx seems rather to be responding to various bits and fragments of what Hegel wrote, finding opportunities to express his own recurring themes in the course of his commentary. At moments when Hegel leads to Greek-like conclusions, Marx takes issue with him as if it were

obvious Hegel had an obligation to avoid those conclusions.[6] He "corrects" Hegel's theory by subjecting it to certain constraints which he feels, but Hegel evidently does not. Those constraints, furthermore, arise out of Marx's dialogical view of the world and his Jewish insistence on the necessary effectiveness of the real.

Where does Marx discover this strange procedure? In terms of his actual biography, we are unlikely ever to know for sure. For the present, though, we would do well to explore the affinities between Marx's way of relating to texts and the traditional Jewish brand of hermeneutics known as midrash.

II

Midrash means the creative style of textual interpretation developed by the rabbis of Palestine and Babylonia in the 3rd-6th centuries C.E. At least, that is one of its meanings. Like the term Torah, midrash expands and contracts, depending on context. Midrash can mean the exegesis of one verse or part of a verse using certain "midrashic" methods. It can refer to the product of such an exegesis, whether that is a one-sentence gloss or a series of alternative readings of the same bit of text. Midrash also includes book-length anthologies of these shorter midrashim, arranged in the order of the verses on

which they comment. (Bereishit Rabbah, for instance, gives all the classic midrash on the book of Bereishit, or Genesis.)

When someone speaks of "the Midrash," furthermore, they usually mean the entire body of these midrashic books, as well as the stories they contain. Indeed, it is a common mistake to refer to any folk story that concerns characters or events in the Torah as a midrash. Some of our contemporary literary critics, on the other hand, focus on the character of midrash as text about text. They use the term to suggest the construction of a piece of writing as a commentary on, or creative misappropriation of, a precursor author's work. They also employ the term midrash to point out the belated and allusive nature of all writing and to encourage its deconstruction.[7]

What ties together this bundle of usages is the activity of doing midrash. The Hebrew root of the word, drash, tells us that midrash is about asking, seeking into, demanding, requiring a response, investigating deeply. When a reader does midrash on a text, s/he wants to know more than what each word and sentence says or what the author intended to say. S/he also goes beyond the historical circumstances of the text's production and the literary art by which it produces its effects. All these points may interest the midrashist, but they do not

satisfy on their own. The reader who is doing midrash wants to discover how the text can help her or him to face the problems of everyday life: her or his own personal dilemmas, and the problems of being a Jew, here and now. The midrash-maker seeks in the text a guide to re-engaging in dialogue with God. By wrestling with Scripture, though, the reader has already begun to rejoin that relationship.[8] Midrash thus becomes not only a communication about action, but an action in itself, an effort of recommitment.

In order to understand midrash (and what the person doing midrash is doing), we need to consider again the unique status of the Torah in the Jewish tradition. We have already remarked that the Torah continuously generates the vital themes of Jewish culture and that within that culture, studying Torah is conceived of as trying to find out what God wants us to do, in order to respond. The Torah is not merely the written covenant of the Jewish partnership with God; it is the place and the moment of dialogue.

Any book which can play such an active role in affairs of cosmic significance is no mere book. In the midrash on the first verse of the book of Genesis, the rabbis accord a new status to Torah: it is the blueprint of creation.

> It is customary that when a human being builds a palace, he [sic] does not build it according to his own wisdom, but according to the wisdom of a craftsman. And the craftsman does not build according to his own wisdom, rather he has plans and records in order to know how to make rooms and corridors. The Holy One, blessed be He, did the same. He looked into the Torah and created the world.[9]

Here we find the Torah lifted out of history--even legendary history, such as the revelation at Sinai--and imagined as existing before creation itself, "written with letters of black fire upon a background of white fire," as another rabbinic source puts it.[10] The world is created according to a ground plan which we can discover in Torah. Hence, say the rabbis who brought midrash to an art, if you want to know anything about the world, look first in the Torah: "Learn it and learn it, for everything is in it."[11] Even and perhaps especially if what you want to understand is not mentioned explicitly in the pages of Scripture, the masters of midrash counsel redoubling your ingenuity. Between the lines, they assure, you will find an answer that will guide you and not mislead.

To be completely relevant, a text must be completely meaningful, too. The rabbis called the Torah an ocean of meaning into which they could plunge again and again without ever plumbing its depths. At the same time, they assumed categorically that every detail of the text--not only its propositions but the order of the sentences, the

repetition or omission of words, the shapes and numerical values of the Hebrew letters, and even the microscopic flourishes of the traditional calligraphy--held important messages for the resourceful reader. Nothing by chance could have been their motto. In fact, Rabbi Akiba, a major teacher of the 2nd century CE, quoted the biblical verse, "For it [Torah] is no empty thing from you: it is your life" (Deut. 32:47) and commented, "If it is empty it is on your account, because you do not know how to interpret it."[12] The duty of every male Jew, according to the rabbis, was to pay that account: to devote substantial time to interpreting Torah, filling its words with meaning that one could then apply to the direction of one's own life.[13]

Now, there is something paradoxical about the rabbis' attitude toward Torah to the modern eye. If the Torah is the ground plan for the world, it must state the objective truth, and then how could it ever be meaningless? Akiba's warning seems misplaced. Surely, a people which believes in a divine document would accumulate a body of authoritative interpretation. Turning exegesis into doctrine, it would eliminate the danger that the text would ever stand empty, or indeed, that believers could mistake its meaning.[14] On the other hand, if the truth of the Torah

is subjective, if its meaning is indeterminate until human readers produce that meaning out of their own thoughts and experiences, why search the Torah at all? Why not apply the same energy to thinking about our problems directly, instead of puzzling through archaic language trying to make sense of it all?

To the rabbis, apparently, these were not serious questions, and not because of blind faith, but simply because the questions missed the point. "Learn it and learn it": assuming that every bit of the Torah has meaning (and potentially many meanings),[15] our knowledge of what it is saying can never exhaust what it has to say. There is always another interpretation. No single reading can ever replace the text, and none ever will, because as time goes on, changes in our particular situations may empower us to recognize something in the text which was closed to us before.

As for the question, "Why the Torah at all?" The rabbis would not answer by asserting the objective truth of the Torah, nor even its utility. They would never justify Torah study in terms of some less ultimate end. Interpreting Torah is maintaining the dialogue with God, which is humanity's purpose. The question the rabbis would resolve by way of midrash was the question that had formed the covenant between God and humankind" "How shall

we hallow the world?" The truth of midrash is not in the text, nor is it in the reader, but in the relation of which both are parts. In midrash, moreover, rabbinic readers filled one part of creation--a central part, its blueprint, the Torah--with meaning. The process of asking was the beginning of the answer. To shirk the task of interpretation, therefore, would not be an assertion of rational autonomy, but a breaking of faith with our divine partner and with each other. The rabbis could only think of deserting the text as a completely irresponsible act.

As if to emphasize the indispensability of human action to Torah, both as text and as divine medium, the rabbis came up with a second story to explain the Torah's uniqueness. Going by the biblical account in Exodus, the Torah was given to Moses at Mount Sinai in written form. The rabbis announced, however, that in addition to the Written Torah, Moses had received an Oral Torah at Sinai: a torah she b'al peh, an "instruction by word of mouth." This Oral Torah he had passed on to his successor Joshua, who transmitted it to the elders of the people, and so on, until in rabbinic times it had lodged itself in the rabbis themselves.[16]

The Oral Torah was never an esoteric doctrine. The rabbis of the third century and onwards spent huge efforts trying to disseminate it among the people, even to make it

into the common law.[17] The existence of an Oral Torah, though, did imply that whoever read the bible without its rabbinic commentary read only a fraction of what Judaism would come to consider the entire text. This had the immediate effect of frustrating Christian proselytizers who sought to expose the Torah as an "Old Testament," since the chain of tradition from Sinai showed that the covenant between God and the Jewish people remained intact.[18]

By settling the question of rabbinic authority, however, the doctrine of an Oral Torah paradoxically set rabbinic imaginations free to interpret the written text in creative and innovative ways. True, in order to say something new, the midrashist had first to refer to something old.[19] The rabbis mined the entire bible for prooftexts with which to support their readings, sometimes creating what they themselves called "a mountain hanging by a hair." In this manner, though, it was almost always possible to find support. In the end, the acceptance or rejection of a midrashic interpretation depended on how well it played off the traditional themes to solve a present-day problem. Breathtakingly, the rabbis declared, "All that a serious student will yet expound before his [sic] teacher has already been told to Moses at Sinai."[20]

By our faithfulness and our hermeneutic zeal, the rabbis declare, we can actually speak for God. Interpretation transcends revelation.

. .

III

Taking advantage of the latitude that the existence of an oral tradition granted, the rabbis who did midrash borrowed from a treasury of exegetical techniques to open the text even wider. They employed slightly different methods depending whether it was their goal to produce halakha or aggadah. Midrash halakhah is the interpretation of Torah (or of Mishnah, inquiries into the right conduct of daily life by rabbis living before 200 CE) so as to produce practical guidance for all one's activities that could be made holy, from making offerings in the Temple to eating dinner. Halakha is often translated as "Jewish law," but this is misleading. It means "way of going," or more precisely, of walking, as in the prophet's injunction, "Walk humbly before the Lord your God" (Micah 6:8).

In order to learn how they should go, the rabbis of the Talmudic period would pose questions to the text in order to clarify what, they were already aware, God asked of them. "From what hour may one recite the eveining prayers?" (Berakhot 2a), for example, assumes we already agree we are obliged to pray at fixed times and we know

of what the evening prayers consist. Another passage (Baba Metzia 2a) begins, "One who leaves either cattle or utensils in a neighbor's care, and they are lost or stolen..." In this case, we know we have moral duties toward our neighbors and special responsibilities when we undertake to safeguard their belongings. The midrash will attempt to spell those responsibilities and duties out.

In doing so, midrash halakhah will not adhere to the familiar logical system of Aristotle, however. It departs from it in four important ways.[21] First, Aristotle's is a logic of classes. To work with it, one places an item within its proper species, or a species within its genus, and remembers what is common to the species or genus as a whole. Midrash halakhah does not draw items into relations of identity or submerge an individual within a class. Its method is not taxonomical. Instead of ordering things hierarchically, it juxtaposes them, finding similarity across differences, so that what we know about one item, we can use to understand another apparently quite unlike it.

Because it is not a logic of classes, midrash halakhah rarely uses the basic unit of Aristotelian logic, the syllogism, in its investigations. The classic school-book syllogism is this: "All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; therefore, Socrates is mortal." Clearly, once we

have agreed that Socrates belongs to the class men, the conclusion is analytically obvious: it follows by definition. In midrash halakhah, though, the closest thing to the syllogism is the kal ve-chomer, or a fortiori argument. Here, in a biblical example, Moses speaks to the people: "Behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against me; and how much more after my death?" (Deut. 31:27). Here, the connection is not is, not identity, but how much more so. In a crucial way, it is not logical but psychological. It depends on the knowledge --possible only through experience in interaction--that Moses's personal authority restrains the people from insurrection. If Moses did not realize this, it would not be obvious, and it would probably not be true.

Unlike Moses, the midrash-maker confronts, not a people, but a text. So, a third difference: midrash relies on associations which are rarely conceptual, often psychological, but primarily linguistic. For instance, using a technique called gezera shavah ("equal injunction"), Rabbi Hillel in the 1st century BCE showed that the Paschal lamb may be sacrificed on the Sabbath, even though it involves labor. Both the laws about the Paschal sacrifice and those about the daily offering contain the word b'moado, "in its appointed season." Numbers 28:10

expressly states that the daily offering is brought on the Sabbath. So, he argued, the word b'moado comes to teach us that the answer is the same in each instance: the lamb may be offered because the cases are equal. What is equal about them? Is there any principle behind the connection? For the rabbis, it does not seem to matter. Identity of expression is reason enough.

Another technique, binyan av, shows the linguistic and psychological bent of midrash even more clearly. Binyan av means "construction of a general rule." On first glance, its procedure seems like simple inductive logic. First, we find a case on which the halakha is given--say, that of a person whose animal causes damage by eating something that belongs to another person. Then, we apply the rulings from that case to a similar instance--say, that of a person whose animal rubs against a wall, causing it to collapse. There are two special points to be noted, though. One: the name the halakhah gives to this whole category, after the original case, is "tooth"--a concrete example, not an abstract quality. Two: in this case (unlike the gezera shavah just cited), the interpreter states what makes the cases similar. Both involve damage wreaked by an animal acting for its own satisfaction. But this hypostasis never replaces "tooth"; in fact, "tooth," the model case, is consulted to clarify the definition,

and not the other way around. And this is typical of midrash halakhah. General statements carry no particular weight, nor do they imply any universal truth beyond the particular cases.

The fourth difference between the logic of Aristotle and that of midrash halakhah follows directly from this point about the general and the particular, and it bears hugely on the distinctiveness of midrash as a style of interpretation. Aristotle's logic forms true statements by describing (i.e., assigning predicates to) primary substance (ousia). Truth is a matter of the "whatness" of the thing, its essential being. But, as just mentioned, midrash remains agnostic about essences. It finds its truths only in context and in situation, and its practitioners regard philosophical principles as irrelevant. For Aristotle, words are only names, mere signs of the nature of things as they are. Doing midrash, on the other hand, one studies "the words of the living God," real, powerful, and effective. One moves, not from signifier to signified, but from sense to sense.

Therefore, in contrast to normal jurisprudence and to Aristotelian theories of textual interpretation, midrash halakhah spends as much time studying those opinions it rejects as those it certifies into practice. The halakhic

interpreter wants to understand the inner logic of each. The assumption is that all the rabbis cited in the Mishnah are "serious students." Their declarations, even those not considered binding, still come from Sinai. Therefore, all must be studied. In the most famous instance, the schools of Hillel and Shammai, both leading teachers of their day, disagreed on nearly every major point for three long years. Finally, a heavenly voice intervened. It announced, "Both these and these are the words of the living God, but the halakhah is according to the school of Hillel."[22] The opinion of the school of Shammai, though, was recorded and is studied to this day.

Divine speakers rarely intrude on rabbinic discussion, though,[23] and so--remarkably, for what is thought of as a legal code--midrash halakhah often leads to an impasse. Frequently, one simply cannot tell from the discussion which version is valid halakhah. So, even in this legalistically-oriented brand of Jewish hermeneutics, the need to find a solution for the present moment does not foreclose the possibility of different solutions for the future. Nor does the methodological strictness of midrash halakhah mean it must needs become a closed system. "We do not enact decrees that the people cannot live by," a Talmudic maxim states. In fact, in later years, custom

acquired the power to overrule halakhah. Once it did, of course, a new midrash might arise to justify the custom, as well.

IV

But not all midrash focuses on producing halakhah. Midrash aggadah starts from different sorts of problems: not "How do we do this?" but "What does this mean?" Assuming that the Torah is completely meaningful, as the rabbis did, they could ask about the meaning of any irregularity in the text and expect a serious answer. Did a sentence contain a word that could easily have been omitted? The rabbinic readers would want to know why. Did a word appear in two dissimilar passages? They might weave a story to reveal a hidden link. Was there a gap in the narrative that could not be explained in any other way? Into the breach, the midrash-makers stepped. They might take advantage of the way biblical Hebrew is written, without vowels or punctuation, to revocalize words or recombine sentences. They might trade on the numerical value of the Hebrew letters to find hints of other messages that would add up to an equal sum. In effect, in order to find meaning, the rabbis allowed themselves to rewrite the text, secure in the belief that they were

doing God's work. "For it is no empty thing from you": the guarantee takes on the force of a command.

Although to the outside reader some of these midrashim may seem to border on the arbitrary, they could not have . . been produced and would not have been accepted without a series of constraints that made them legitimate interpretations in the Jewish world. To begin with, midrash aggadah is conditioned by the text itself. "No text ever loses its plain meaning," the rabbis ruled.[24] However elaborate the lesson one can draw from a biblical verse by midrash, its more straightforward message (relatively speaking) remained; it was never cancelled, as in allegory. Moreover, every midrash had to connect itself, even by a long and tenuous chain of ideas, to a verse or several verses of Torah. Also, no midrash could successfully claim to exhaust the meaning of its text. It is common, in fact, for midrashic anthologies to list a number of readings on a verse, sometimes more than one attributed to the same source, and to introduce each one simply as "Another interpretation."

Beyond the stimulus of the text, however, what really determined the making of midrash and conferred legitimacy on its final products was a set of concerns and preoccupations shared by rabbinic writers and their readers during the Talmudic period. In his study The Rabbinic

Mind, Max Kadushin calls these organizing themes "value-concepts."[25] Value-concepts are not values as opposed to facts, nor are they evaluations. Instead, they are the subjects of which a text can treat that make it seem significant to a given set of readers. Kadushin lists the main rabbinic value-concepts as the themes of God's justice, God's love (or mercy), Torah, and the people of Israel. Midrash aggadah mostly addresses these four topics and the relations between them. Another way of saying this, and perhaps a better, is that when the rabbis would do midrash, they would seek out problems in the text that might have a bearing on one of these four.

The value-concepts act as a complex, organismic whole that defines, to a great extent, what it meant to be a Jew during the 3rd-6th centuries CE. Both the self and the "special character of the group," according to Kadushin, depended largely on "the transmission of the valuational terms."[26] They were--and still are--a large part of Jewish culture. By pegging interpretation to these themes, therefore, midrashists made sure of their audience, and by building commentary on commentary, they guaranteed their findings a plausibility that mere pronouncements could not attain.

But did the rabbis believe their own midrashim, and did their audiences believe them? It depends on what we

mean by belief. If believing is being faced with a question about whether some event actually happened and choosing a "yes" response instead of a "no," then Jews have never believed midrashim--but they never disbelieved them, either. That yes-or-no question rarely troubled them. Kadushin points out that midrash-makers often hear and acknowledge valid objections to their preferred reading and adhere to it anyway. "Such persistence," he states, "surely implies a belief of some kind, but a belief which...is just as surely not unqualified."[27]

A receptive attitude toward midrash necessarily involves a state of mind Kadushin calls "indeterminate belief." In modern philosophical terms, to engage a midrash is to bracket questions of truth in order to seek meaning. The midrashist and his or her readers play with the text, sometimes lightheartedly, but with a serious purpose. The stories that they foster say something about their real and pressing problems; through midrash, they gain a deeper understanding of why and how to act.

If a belief is implicated here, it is the bedrock belief in the meaningfulness of Torah and in the activity of interpretation. To believe is to trust.[28] Doing midrash, especially aggadic midrash, is like exploring one's relationship with another person: knowing objective

facts about the other may not move the relationship along any further. Through midrash, Jews "get to know" God and the world. They "believe" in so far as they apply the lessons they learn to the living of their own lives. Compared to that faith, what importance has mere truth-value?

V

It is useful to look at an example of aggadic midrash which James Kugel has analyzed. The text is Psalm 145, one of many Hebrew poems composed alphabetically, with each line beginning with a new letter of the alphabet. The rabbis noticed, though, that no line starts with the letter nun: it is omitted from the sequence. Of course, they had to ask, "Why?" Rabbi Yohanan gives one explanation. David, the supposed author of the Psalms, knew that in Amos 5:2, the letter nun would begin the dire sentence "She has fallen (nafelah) and will no more rise, the virgin of Israel." He left out the nun verse in order to avoid referring to this prophecy of downfall. Rabbi Nahman bar Isaac seconded this opinion, adding that the next verse following the omission provides the antitdote: "The Lord lifts up all who are fallen, and straightens up all who are bent."

So far, this is fairly straightforward--for midrash. True, the question is not one most readers would have come

up with, but the midrashist is constantly on the lookout for such minutiae. True, the answer Rabbi Yohanan gives makes David, who lived long before Amos, remarkably precognitive. It is a rabbinic dictum, though, that there is "no before or after in Torah."[30] So, one verse can answer a question about another verse wholely disconnected from it. Rabbi Nahman's addendum, on the other hand, takes the mere fact of juxtaposition to warrant his reading one verse into its neighbor. His interpretation, together with the one it builds on, treats God's mercy toward the people Israel, thus relating two value-concepts in a wholly traditional way.

The sages of Palestine, though, offer a more daring reading than these two Babylonian rabbis, not of Psalm 145, but of the problematic verse from Amos. They divide the sentence differently, thus: "She has fallen and will no more--rise, virgin of Israel!"

What this midrash does is to suspend the original question (and the other answer to that question) in order to focus on the real problem: the catastrophe that has befallen the Jews' relation with God. At the time these rabbis wrote, Judea was an abject tributary of Rome. Titus had destroyed the Temple in 70 CE and carried many Jews off into slavery. A military revolt led by Simon Bar Kokhba in 135 CE had also been crushed, dashing the

Messianic expectations of his followers. Ten of the most prominent rabbis of Palestine had been tortured to death by the Romans. Jerusalem, the capital and holy city, was declared off-limits to Jews. The country as a whole had lost much of its population, and the Jews for the second time were dispersed abroad, with no imminent prospects for return. One Jewish sect, the Nazarenes or Christians, had used these disasters as evidence that the relationship between God and the Jewish people had come to an end, and what they asserted, many others feared.

Against this background, consider what the Palestinian sages did and did not do in their midrash on Amos 5:2. They did not argue, as they might have, that Amos's words only applied to the Babylonian Exile (586-510 BCE) of which he had been speaking. Nor did they read "will no more rise" in a relative sense, as "not for a long time," although this too would have been possible. They chose not to take "Israel" as the northern kingdom, differentiated from Judah, though this reading would have at least mitigated the disaster. Above all, unlike their prophetic forerunners, Isaiah and Jeremiah, they refused to rely on God's omnipotence and God's capacity to annul prophecies of doom out of divine love.

Any of these solutions, in order to reassure, would have required from the people their full belief: not only

their belief in the validity of the interpretation but, crucially, belief that what it revealed must be true, that God would never hide his face forever. But of course, this faith was exactly what was lacking. The rabbis of Palestine chose instead a solution that required only the willing suspension of disbelief, or what Kadushin calls "indeterminate belief which, on occasion, can harden and become determinate."[31] Their midrash, though serious, is at the same time darkly comic. It does not need to be accepted, only repeated (as a good joke often is) over and over, until it becomes part of a common culture which laughs in the face of exile. Together with halakhah, midrashic stories such as these gave the Jews the strong social cohesiveness they needed in order to survive in a world whose meaning they no longer understood.

It is the midrashic function of restoring meaning to a chaotic world which we can find renewed when Marx does theory.

VI

No one would mistake any writing of Karl Marx's for a specimen of the literary genre midrash.[32] Marx is not writing about Torah; he is commenting on philosophy and political economy. His language is German, French, or English, never Hebrew or Aramaic. He does not steer by

the set of value-concepts Kadushin enumerates: he cares little for God or Israel except as historical examples and curiosities. True, he is passionate for plays-on-words. At the height of an argument, he often throws a pun at his readers, such as his contention in The Holy Family that the Hegelian movement needed to bathe in a "river of fire"--in German, a Feuer-bach. These witticisms make Marx's writings memorable, as clever midrashim do for rabbinic texts. But nothing hangs on them. Marx's argument can go on perfectly well without them.

There is more to Marx's theory than just his argument, though. In his manner of doing theory, his activity or practice of theorizing, we find Marx doing something we might call midrashic. As we have remarked, before Marx creates his own theory, he reads. His writing proceeds from his reading as commentary. In his writing, furthermore, Marx gives an interpretation, or reading, of his precursors and their texts, a peculiar kind of reading which makes them say--or accuses them of neglecting to say--something about the themes which seem important to him (his own "value-concepts"). In the case of Hegel, he systematically attacks and transforms the earlier writer's theory at just those points where it ignores or disagrees with his own sense of what is real. And that sense of reality, as we learned in chapter 3, is very much tied to

the worldview of the Jewish tradition. So, Marx "does midrash" on Hegel in a double sense: he comments on particular bits of the Hegelian text in order to make his own points, and those points make the text significant for readers whose perspective continues the concerns of the Jewish tradition.

But then, we are faced with a paradox. Marx rejects Judaism and adopts philosophy and political economy, all the while studying them as if they were, or should be, Torah. He demands that they mean something for the story about the world, humanity, and history suggested by his Jewish sense of the real. If they do not, he reinterprets them so that they do. Here is a strange unconscious piety, an unwilling reverence in the midst of secularity and socialism. How can we account for this mixing of worlds, which Marx neither announces nor explains?

In her discussion of modern thinkers influenced by midrash, Handelman describes a tendency she calls "heretic hermeneutics."[33] Writers who work in this mode can simultaneously affirm their identities as moderns and as Jews without completely submitting to either. This Houdini-like maneuver involves a double displacement. First, the writer leaves the world of Torah behind. Attention shifts. For Freud, psychology, and for Bloom

and Derrida, literary theory become the objects of endless investigation. Into these new realms, though, the heretics port the old demands. Dreams and works of literature are treated, in the words of Freud, "as Holy Writ"--in other words, as Torah. They are expected, even demanded, to be meaningful down to their tiniest detail. The modern critic interprets them as a midrash-maker would do: to make them significant in terms s/he believes the text and s/he must share.

With Marx, we cannot see the exegetical techniques, but we can sense the gravitational pull that midrash exerts in his writings. "For it is no empty thing from you": Marx attaches himself to Hegel (and then to political economy) because their tantalizing similarities to the reality in which he believes and which he is struggling to bring to life will not let him ignore them. He can never fully accept them either; at best, he can note them in a spirit of indeterminate belief. Eventually, he must reorder everything, including his own first readings.

"Of course," Marx wrote in an afterword to Capital, "the method of presentation must differ in form from that of inquiry."[34] We have already seen that the way Marx presented one central feature of his theory, its relation to that of Hegel, has obscured more than it has helped. Without explaining midrash, Marx could not explain his

own activity. Without recognizing the demands his Jewish sense of the real imposed on him, he could only wish and hope to find an audience that would share his value-concepts. Yet, the Jewish terms in which his ontology and his philosophy of writing make sense were foreign to Marx's audience and to Marx himself. In the next chapter, we will consider how this dilemma affects our reading of Marx's overall project, and we will ask how the Jewish theme of exile, retranslated by Marx's theory of alienation, may help us understand Marx better.

CHAPTER FIVE

ESTRANGEMENT IN A STRANGE LAND

Everything Marx ever wrote--philosophy, history, economics, politics--takes aim at the problem of alienation. Overcoming the historical circumstances which have forced some of us to work for others, under their control and for their profit, thus wasting our own creative powers and losing the commodities we end up spawning, the raw materials we might have used, and the wholeness of self and society we need more than anything but survival itself: this is Marx's theme and his goal as a theorist.

Alienation is the key-word of Marx's early writings, but it appears over and over in Capital, too.[1] And well it might. For alienation and the transcending of alienation both require, in Marx's own words, "very palpable, material conditions," and it is to discover the details of those conditions that Marx begins his economic researches at all.[2]

As crucial as alienation is to Marx, it has proved equally troublesome to Marxists. First, they have had to defend the term from social psychologists and other researchers who would set it equal to "dissatisfaction."[3] This apparently value-neutral term in fact strips away the whole theory of human needs which gives alienation

its meaning. Among Marxists, furthermore, there are those who would resist the language of alienation altogether, preferring the more analytical categories of historical materialism.[4] Their choice weights the scales in favor of a deterministic reading of Marx, which sits poorly with Marx's Jewish emphasis on the importance of human action.

A third problem arises in humanist Marxism, which casts the distortions of the self and of social relations produced by capitalism as mere objects of protest, exemplars of "man's inhumanity to man" [sic]. At its most basic, the humanist approach underestimates the power of economic and institutional barriers to human freedom, something Marx never did.[5]

We should not be misled by this multiplicity of partial readings. None of his followers have deserted Marx's struggle against alienation completely. As Alasdair MacIntyre acutely observes, "When a tradition is in good order it is always partially constituted by an argument about the goods the pursuit of which gives to that tradition its particular point and purpose."[6] Using this standard, the debate about alienation may even be a sign of Marxism's continuing good health. As long as the place of alienation still matters to the participants, the tradition goes on.

Yet as MacIntyre also suggests, sometimes an argument loses touch with what it is about, and a tradition "gets interpreted and misinterpreted in terms of the pluralism which threatens to submerge us all."[7] Some readings of Marx's theory of alienation do let us learn more, and some, differently than others. Faced with the necessity to choose among interpretations, we should ask: what version will help us understand the urgency with which Marx confronts alienation? For alienation is no abstract problem to Marx: it is more like an obsession. What can we do to feel that obsession as Marx did? Since otherwise, we shall be hard put to say we have understood it at all.

Where shall we search for an understanding of alienation's profound influence on our lives according to Marx's theory? Let us begin by ignoring the ongoing debate on the subject, and let us continue by setting aside for the moment Marx's own writings on alienation. Marx did not provide us with the full context we needed to understand his midrash on Hegel. We may also suspect that when he writes about alienation, he is not pausing to explain what he is doing. We shall have to imagine that ourselves. So, let us approach alienation circuitously, edging up to it from an entirely unexpected direction. We will explore the meaning of alienation via a midrash on the theme of exile.

II

The text we are examining is the first line of the book of Bereishit, or Genesis. We are accustomed to the translation which reads, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Now the earth was formless and void..."

The Torah, though, is written without vowels or punctuation; hence, many interesting possibilities occur. An equally valid reading would have Genesis 1:1-2 say, "When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth became (hayta) formelss and void."[8] Now, long ago, in the 16th century CE, Rabbi Isaac Luria, called the Lion, read the verse in just this manner. And here is the story he told.

> Before Creation, God filled infinity. There was no dot of space, no instant of time, which was not part of the divine. In order to create the world--because God was lonely--God had first to make room, to withdraw from infinity and to contract within himself.
>
> So, the first thing created was the empty space, the nothing, the "formless and void." Into this absence, God emanated pure divine energy. It was like a river of light pouring, liquid, into containers also made of light.
>
> But the freely flowing emanation could not contain itself. The vessels shattered. The shards fell into chaos. And the scraps of the broken vessels came to encase the light they had held like scars over wounds, or like thick, woody shells around nuts.[9]

All that we now recognize as our world, said Luria and his followers, is really the jumble that resulted from the shattering of the vessels. The world is infinitely

precious--every bit contains sparks of the divine--but just for that reason, it is direly in need of repair. The Lurianic Kabbalah expresses this extreme urgency by stating that when the primordial vessels shattered, at that same moment God's imminent presence, called Shekhinah, went into exile. God's own self became divided.

The Shekhinah is exiled here with us in this reality, which is the only reality, but which is tragically unlike what it should be. We are called, the kabbalists would say, to redeem the sparks of divine light by hallowing every being. And they would preface every religious act--which, given the task of hallowing the entire world, included sitting down to a meal and putting on clothes--with the declaration, "This is done for the sake of reuniting God and His Shekhinah." What has been fragmented will be made whole; what had been exiled will return.

Like any good midrash, Rabbi Luria's picks up themes from the traditional account and deepens them in unexpected ways. The story of the shattering of the vessels makes human action absolutely crucial in the universe. It underlines God's dependence on humanity, for not only do we determine the success or failure of divine purposes: we must heal the divine being. God is constituted in relation to us, and the predicament which imposes God's needs sets us our task as well. Furthermore, that task concerns

itself with our day-to-day existence and the practical details of material life. All this is traditional, and it fits easily with what was "told to Moses at Sinai."

Yet Luria's tale also revises traditional Jewish thought in a drastic way. In the Torah, "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him." "This Instruction," God's voice in the dialogue, is "in your mouth and in your heart, to do it" (Exodus 30). We find no mention of God's purposes gone awry, no indication that we need to know anything that preceded the world in order to hallow it. In the Torah, creation is unfinished because it is ongoing; in the Kabbalah, because it is broken off.

Thus, the exile of the Shekhinah is a catastrophic event which disrupts cosmic purposes and which makes reality ironic. It requires our unrelenting effort to effect its reversal, to bring God's presence and ourselves home from exile. Short of that return, the Kabbalah suggests, we cannot know our true purposes, and we cannot be whole. Return and the longing for return become the content of life. In the absence of dialogue, the need to restore dialogue establishes what it means in Judaism to be a person.[10]

I want to propose that Marx's theory of alienation shares the basic movements of the story of exile and return we find in Luria, and that the tensions in the

idea of return parallel the tensions surrounding Marx's concept of revolution. Taking alienation truly into account, we will have to revise our understanding of Marx's ontology, too, just as Luria's midrash on exile at creation rewrote the Torah's theme of divine-human dialogue.

All these convergences will become more evident, though, if we go back to examine other Jewish texts in which the theme of exile is at work. As we noted earlier, in Torah each recurrence of a theme must be read backwards and forwards as a commentary on every other episode which it informs. We will discuss three biblical examples which, though they pertain to events in history and not before it, exemplify the themes of exile and return.[11] Next, as a kind of summation, we will do our own midrash on a verse from a 20th century Jewish poet. Then and only then will we be ready to discuss Marx's theory of alienation in the framework of exile.

III

Luria's midrash tells us how exile affects God and the cosmos; the story of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden shows how human beings suffer from it, too. In order to learn that particular lesson, though, we need first to set aside the Christian reading with which, since John Milton, we are so familiar. That story speaks not of

exile but of "Adam's fall." It postulates that the sin of eating from the forbidden tree revealed the inherent sinfulness of human nature, which manifested itself again directly in Adam and Eve's descent into sexuality from their (assumed) previously spiritual plane.

Jewish readers have interpreted the story differently. In the midrash on Genesis 2-3, disobedience, not sexuality, is the sin for which Adam and Eve are banished. Sexuality is recognized to be fraught with moral dangers, but it is also a positive commandment: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Genesis 1:28). Moreover, at least one midrashist claims that the serpent found Eve alone because Adam had "engaged in his natural functions (an idiom for intercourse) and then fallen asleep."[12] Clearly, sexuality was not a consequence of the serpent's temptation.

Beyond that, Martin Buber questions the notion that sin (or "a decision between good and evil") is the topic of the story at all. Instead, he points out, Adam and Eve decide for the knowledge of good and evil--or, better, knowledge through the categories of good and evil, "adequate awareness of the opposites latent in creation."[13] Arthur Waskow goes on to wonder whether leaving Eden was not a punishment but a necessary step toward maturity--less like the shattering of the vessels and more like that initial contraction by which (in Luria's story) God

prepared for the creation of the world.[14] This reading seems to contradict the text, but it shows how far from, say, Milton's Eden the Jewish commentator feels free to go.

Since we are not compelled to read the story of the expulsion as a lesson about sexuality and original sin, we are free to ask what we can learn from it about the theme of exile. Adam and Eve, we are told, were driven forth from the Garden. This exile transformed their lives and those of their descendants, so much so that an angel with a flaming sword is a fit symbol for the impossibility of their going on unchanged. We can ask the text a new question, then, about the consequences of the expulsion: "How does exile affect human lives? What did Adam and Eve lose when they left Eden behind?"

The Torah mentions four changes that confronted the first couple when they departed the Garden. They became ashamed before each other and before God. They had to work hard and unrelentingly in order to survive. Even "in the sweat of thy brow," they could never be sure of producing what they needed to live; the earth from which they sprang became the adversary. Finally, the sexual relation and the act of giving birth became bound up with pain and travail. All the activities in which human beings had engaged in Eden as partners in creation, they now find themselves doing under the whip of necessity. The most basic human

needs, food, labor, and love, can only be met sometimes, uncertainly, and in a way that denies humanity's original status as namers and tenders of the world. Exile means for Adam and Eve that a sense of estrangement has filtered in to their dialogue with God which affects both God and human. It cannot be willed away, only struggled with and gradually, painfully transcended.

But humanity decided to try for a shortcut. Instead of learning how to be human in order to become God's partners once again, they opted to become gods themselves. On the plain of Shinar, the tower went up, story after story, an assault on the heavens. Building the Tower of Babel was a truly monumental effort, spurred on by a fear of equal proportion: "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11:4). Ironically, by their own actions, the builders provoked the fate they feared. The Torah tells that God "did there confound the language of all the earth." None of them could understand each other. Their common purpose lost, they scattered. Their exile was complete with the fragmenting of their shared speech; after that, physical dispersal was all but a foregone conclusion. The tower-builders had lost sight of God's purposes in creating human beings who could act, and so they lost, too, the ability to frame common human purposes of any sort from Babel onwards.

Hence it is the people of Israel and not polyglot humanity which carries the burden of repairing the world for most of the biblical story. That nation suffers exile twice (once in biblical times) with the successive destructions of the Temple, first by the Babylonians in 586 BCE and then in 70 CE by the Romans. In both instances, not only do the Jews become captives, uprooted from their land; they also undergo the destruction of the legal and cultural institutions that had defined everyday Jewish life. Many of the 613 mitzvot, or commandments of the Torah, could not be carried out anywhere but in the land of Israel. Others had no application in the climates and social systems the exiles began to inhabit, while still others made sense only as directives to a self-governing people.

With good reason, then, the Jews of the Diaspora asked, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" Like Eve and Adam, they had all they could do to keep themselves alive on alien and hostile soil. Like the shocked crowd at Babel, they were forced to speak in new languages, both metaphorically and literally, which blocked the expression and even the memory of what they had been working at before. And when they swore, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand lose its cunning," they underscored the tacit truth that henceforth, Jerusalem might only live as the capital of Jewish life in memory.

IV

Memory, and the language which preserves it, have become matters of life and death for Jews in exile. As Harold Bloom writes, "Jewry can survive without a Jewish language...but not without language, not without an intense, obsessive concern that far transcends what we ordinarily call literacy."[15] Gestures and rituals have the power to stir something nameless within, and sometimes to evoke an unspoken meaning that, like a tradition, gives people their bearings for a little while. In exile, though, what is last to give way as the institutional foundations of identity crumble is language: for Jews, the discursive structures of dialogue. No matter what Jews know or accept of their religion, when they address the demand to hallow the world through material action guided by changing human needs, they return to the situation which seems most real to them and in which they feel most right to themselves.

Language helps create a meaningful world--or destroy it. It follows that one aspect of exile is losing one's own voice, having to use concepts that others recognize to address problems that others deem significant in order to say anything at all, even indirectly, about what concerns one most. And one route to return would be to speak in a voice one can claim as one's own" to tell the story of one's estrangement, one's present needs, and one's

stuttering attempts to reshape the world into a home. To tell the story--and to attract an audience which has the terms, the empathy, and above all, the good will to hear.

As our final midrash on the theme of exile, then, let us try to listen to someone trying to be heard. American Jewish poet Charles Reznikoff writes:

> How difficult for me is Hebrew:
> even the words for mother, for bread, for sun
> are foreign. How far have I been exiled, Zion.

"How difficult for me is Hebrew": this opening sentence, to any present or former student, calls up a vision which is instantly familiar. Someone is working hard at learning a language without having any real aptitude for it. Many know how that feels; we can shake our heads ruefully and sympathize. But, this man is a Jew. The language he is trying to learn is his own language. How can we comprehend that?

For just a moment, imagine yourself suddenly forgetting how to speak English. You have to express yourself now, say, in German, in words that seem strange and disconnected, in a grammar you learned out of a textbook. Not only do you have to search for words when you try to talk with other people; in your own mind, you hear yourself in an alien tongue.

Can you feel that? The constant groping for vocabulary, the unsureness that you've said what you meant to

say or that what you've said made sense, the biting scorn or condescending patience of the others toward this halfwit foreigner? "Difficult," the poet says. Difficult is not the word for your condition.

But think, instead, that this loss of yours did not happen yesterday, but a long time ago, a lifetime, in fact, as far back as you can remember. You are unaware that you ever spoke another language. Only, there are these gaps in conversation where you know you want to say something but cannot figure out what, only that it is important. So, you try anyway, hoping to reach someone with a piece of it, a hint, a spark. To your amazement, your neighbors hear only what they expect to hear. The mold of their common understandings keeps casting your tentative, hopeful messages back into the same distorted shape. Do you rage at their obtuseness? Or blame yourself for this vague something you cannot seem to say? This is a dimension of exile: losing your own thoughts to a foreign language.

"Even the word for mother, for bread, for sun/are foreign." Why these words? Why not bigger, meatier words like freedom, power, Spirit, or, for that matter, alienation? The poet feels estranged precisely from the everyday. If he knew his own language, through interpretation the tiniest, most personal elements of his life would become sources of meaning and chances for action.

Because the terms of his intimate existence are foreign to him, the poet finds them "difficult"--not as a problem is difficult, but as a person is: obstreperous, obstructionist, perversely resisting what is obvious and what has to be done, which is the hallowing of the everyday. Obvious, though, it is no longer. How can it be, when everyone and everything, including the language he speaks, insist it cannot be done? This is the second dimension of exile: when your own needs seem foreign, and the difficulty of an integrated life confronts you like an enemy.

The poet seeks his own language, his own needs, and even his own land. "How far have I been exiled, Zion": the hill country of Judea is the terrain of Jewish identity. But exile is not a matter of geography alone. This thick-witted Hebrew student could move to Jerusalem tomorrow--and be worse off, not better. His problem, we read, is not land but life. The State of Israel is not Zion: in Zion, "the words for mother, for bread, for sun" would be spoken in a living communal effort to discover how to do that for which we are. No state we know can do that. No country has ever been Zion.

Is this too paradoxical, the poet's longing to return to a place he has never been? On the contrary. How can his need be silent until it is fulfilled? Zion is not an abstraction. To him, it is no completely rational society

inhabited by two-dimensional figures. It is what he is longing for with his blood and heart and bones. Even now, perhaps, he is sometimes there: not in a blinding flash, but in the sound of a still, small voice that whispers to him what his words might mean. He is called back...and his return becomes real, and he starts to live a real life. Following Marx's poignant phrase, he begins to make his poetry out of the future.

But ever and again, he finds out how far his exile has carried him. The familiar landmarks have shifted; it is no good trying to steer by them now. His pleas fall on empty air. He is suddenly a man alone, having trouble with his language lessons; while, all around him float the shibboleths of a country which is inescapably, inexcusably foreign. Being in exile, then, means trying to sing the Lord's song in a strange land.

But this brings us to a fourth dimension of exile, one that Reznikoff only hints at, so that we will need the fine reading skills of midrash to discover it.

When the poet says, in the first line, "How difficult for me is Hebrew," he is speaking soliloquy, a form which heightens the sense of isolation his words express. By the third line, however, he changes his mode of address. He employs apostrophe, a figure in which the person addressed is not literally there. "How far have I been

exiled," he says, "Zion." Now, what of it? Is there anything here that adds to our understanding of exile beyond simply concluded that the poet knows his trade?

"Zion." The apostrophe calls into play someone who is not there even when there means "in the words of the poem." It speaks to someone whose name the poet never utters. For "Zion" cannot be the one meant to hear. Zion is a place, a condition for the task, but not a partner in it. The poet is reaching out metonymically to someone for whom his difficulty matters. To whom is the poet speaking?

When, throughout history, Jews have found themselves challenged by the need to integrate all aspects of their lives and to dedicate them to the fulfillment of the world, and when, so choosing and having been chosen, they asked how they should begin to do so, they traditionally named the one they questioned, God. The name, however, is unimportant. What matters, to Judaism and to this Jewish poet, is the act of questioning, which thrusts the questioner into the middle of a relationship based on a shared predicament.

This entering into dialogue is the beginning of an exile's return. It is only a beginning--for the poet is still a stranger in a strange land. But if the motion of dialogue impels him to build the community he calls Zion, it will enable him little by little to feel at home in the

world. The dialogical relation makes a home for him because it establishes the structure of self, group, and world on which his identity depends.

V

The stories of exile we have just explored, from Luria's to Reznikoff's, plumb the meaning of exile more deeply than any definition can do. The text of the Torah, we remarked earlier, is its own best summary. Just so, the stories which introduce us to the theme of exile also provide our models of the condition. No description or exposition can do as well, for none can be sure to reproduce in us the emotional response which is vital to knowing exile from within. We were able, though, to detect certain themes from the Torah narrative for their pertinence to our present inquiry, and we can do the same with our stories of exile. Let us carefully direct our attention to certain more clearly universal features of exile, aspects we may recognize once again in the lineaments of Marx's theory of alienation.

We can think of exile in two distinct but intrinsically related ways. Exile may be the burden of some particular social group, or it may be the condition of a whole society, affecting all its individual members.

In the first sense, we can specify that exile touches only certain kinds of groups within society. We would not expect to apply it in describing the group of left-handed people, nor redheads, Democrats, or Virginians. Exile occurs only to groups which share more existentially basic situations, so that the defining characteristics of the group also structure the selves of its members. Most likely, a group in exile will possess some shared purpose, or task, the elaboration and continuous reinterpretation of which is a central element in the constitution of the group. Exile, then, affects people in relation to how their identities depend on situations or purposes shared in common within a group.

Again, we can stipulate that a group which finds itself in exile (in the first sense) is never the dominant force in society. One of the important ways in which exile is manifested is in the relation of the exiles to the dominant group and to the parameters of the self that group maintains for the whole society. We might therefore propose that some group X (e.g., the Jews) is in exile with respect to society Y which it inhabits (e.g., 19th-century Germany) as a result of some factor or factors Z which have to do with the self created by its task or situation, that task or situation not being constitutive of society in general.

It is already clear, both from our stories and our analysis, that even a profound difference may not be an exile. What factor puts a non-dominant social group, partially constituted by a task or situation, into the exile state? Primarily, it is the group's divergence from the mainstream in the way that its members construct reality. Simply by responding to their task, they tacitly employ categories of meaning and standards of significance which others do not use or recognize.

The exiles themselves may be aware of the incongruity, or they may not, and whether they are will have little bearing on whether their differing sense of the real becomes a problem for them. If their group lives apart, interacting with the larger society mainly for instrumental purposes, then they can maintain their understanding of self and reality with little strain. (The ghetto-dwelling Jews of premodern Europe are an example.)[16] If, however, the group lives in and among its neighbors, partakes of their culture, and permits its members to pursue goals extraneous to its existential task, and yet still forms its members so they must respond to that task, then the scene of a tragic conflict is set.

The members of such a group as we have been describing (and modern Jews, I contend, are such a group) must know the world and conduct their actions in society on the

basis of two different senses of reality: that of the group and that of their general culture. Both are their own. The individual's identity is incomplete unless s/he can somehow manage to make sense of herself or himself as a character in both stories. Yet a world in which one is called to do a certain task may differ from a world which demands another direction to one's efforts. It is almost certainly irreconcilable with a notion of the world which gives people no purposes at all, only arbitrary and contingent desires.

Now, the members of this group are in exile. They lack an ontology which accepts all their concerns as real, as well as a language adequate to express them. Consequently, they cannot express their constitutive purposes and needs, either to outsiders or to each other. They have lost the shared context of meaning which makes interpreting one's own experience possible. Therefore, they are impeded from formulating their experience, even to themselves.

The relation between the exiles and their neighbors is not symmetrical. Most citizens of society possess a language and an ontology sufficient to their needs. They can make themselves understood by each other and by the exiles, and in general they can know when they are making sense: that is, when their statements and claims will be

taken seriously, with a good chance of securing assent. On those rare occasions when other members of society do not make sense to the exiles, it is the exiles and not society who are deemed to have failed, in society's judgment and usually in their own.

For the exiles, the discursive norms of society are the flaming sword barring their way. They can only enter the garden of relaxed, routine discussion by leaving important parts of themselves behind. And this continues to be true as long as they are in any way part of the group, until they have left their specific situation and task completely behind.

The exile which affects specific groups is not only a malaise of discourse; it is the fingerprint of power. We can see power at work in the silencing of the exiles about their particular experience, the excluding of their difference from what society counts as real, and the producing of the exiles themselves as persons who must give a rational explanation of themselves and cannot. Power operates at the same time to estrange the exiles from themselves, from each other, and from other human beings. The social relations in which they seek fulfillment are fraught with tensions, instead. Exile also extends into the realm of politics as usual. The particular group which is exiled cannot use the procedures of liberal democracy

to address its needs: first, because it cannot formulate them; second, because many of them deal with what are called "private" matters; third, because the language of rights, interests, and utility cannot justify them; and fourth, because by admitting themselves unable to fit the narrow confines of the rational individual, the exiles declare themselves unfit to participate in public life.

So far, we have spoken only of exile in the first sense, as it affects particular social groups. We have outlined it as a breakdown in the normal, equal relations between members of those groups and society. Implicit in that definition, though, is another understanding of exile, one which designates a condition which may affect the whole of society.

Let us assume (as both Marx and the Jewish tradition do) that humanity shares, not a common end, but a common purpose. Let us further assume that pursuing this task requires the active development of our human powers. Any society which fails to embody this pursuit in its constitution runs the risk of becoming an obstacle to human development. It matters naught whether the purpose which makes us human is defined as hallowing the world or as realizing human powers, or as love, brotherhood/sisterhood, community, or spiritual nobility. The individuals who

compose such a society will be hindered in their pursuit of any of these since they cannot rely on one another.

In some cases, a society which bears this second sort of exile will lack not only a purpose, but any notion of common purpose or why such a shared project might be worthwhile. If a group in exile of the first sort inhabited a society of exile in the second meaning, the estrangement of self, group, and social whole would have reached its ultimate crazy peak.

VI

We can read Marx's theory of alienation as an attempt to capture in words the plight of an exiled group in a society without purpose: namely, the workers under capitalism. The reality of the proletariat, Marx argues, is structured by its members' deep and abiding need for creative work. This need is generated by the task Marx believes all human beings are drawn to, but in which the working class of all segments of society is most frustrated: the realization of their human powers. Workers, Marx contends, feel the pull of this aspect of themselves as something tangible, and they suffer from not being able to pursue it.

> What constitutes the alienation of labor? First, that the work is external to the worker, that it is not part of his [sic] nature; and that, consequently, he does not fulfill himself in his work,

> but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his physical and mental energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased.[17]

The misery Marx describes is partly the result of exploitation. In his famous chapter of Capital on "The Working Day," he serves an indictment of capitalism for laying waste the lives of the workers with long hours and brutal conditions.[18] Primarily, though, we find Marx attacking the evils of alienation itself: not the loss of things, but the catastrophe of capitalism for human relations. Alienated labor, writes Marx, disrupts the self insofar as it prevents the workers from fulfilling their task as species-beings, which is essential to whom they are. By the same token, it takes away their common purpose by denying it any social importance. As its end product, too, alienated labor reproduces a class system and a mode of production which allows no room and provides no resources for the workers to develop in any direction that does not boost profit and productivity.[19]

If we say, then, that the working class is in exile within capitalist society because their sense of the real requires them to do what capitalism makes impossible, we will have gone a long way toward showing why the transcending of alienation is what Marx cares about most. Interpreted as exile, alienation is more than an injustice: it is a tragedy. It deprives the workers of

the ability to make sense of their world. Without that ability, none of their powers matter.

But it is not only the workers who are alienated. In The Holy Family, Marx writes:

> The propertied class and the class of the proletariat present the same human self-alienation. But the former class finds in this self-alienation its confirmation and its good, its own power: it has in it a semblance of human existence.[21]

Within the capitalist scheme of things, the bourgeoisie holds all the advantages. As Ollman comments, though, these privileges "concern registering a higher score on a scale which itself must be condemned."[22] The capitalists are no more free than the workers to pursue their human task. They, too, inhabit a world in which commodities and money rule the uses of human energy,[23] and labor is treated as a source of a mysterious good called "value" instead of as an intrinsically human activity.[24] Workers and capitalists both conduct their lives according to the variations of the market, and its boom-and-bust cycle (and not their own needs and powers) supplies the situation to which they respond and which they search for meaning. We can summarize this general craziness, this inversion of human reality,[25] by saying Marx portrays capitalism as a society in exile. For people to become free, that exile must be ended.

Reading alienation as an analogue to exile, we understand why it is Marx's overriding concern. We also begin to appreciate the cruel irony alienation inflicts on us, according to Marx. Exile takes the challenge of hallowing the world in dialogue--which already demands our every effort--and adds to it the agonies of distance, changing the joys of partnership in creation to the numbing struggle of existence. Likewise, alienation distances us from our own powers and our own needs. It makes our immediate sense of what to do unreliable; our apperception of the real, ambivalent; and our basis for joint action, contingent and unpredictable. Neither exile nor alienation stifle the call that moves us to realize our task. Both, however, muffle its volume and baffle our attempts to respond.

If that is so, however, then Marx finds himself in a very serious dilemma as a theorist. On the view of Marx's ontology we took in chapter 3, he should strive with his theory to bring his neighbors back to an awareness of their still unmet needs. He should explain how the social structures under which they are laboring have limited their humanity and stultified their consciousness, and he should move them to revolutionize the mode of production in all its social ramifications.[26]

The theory of alienation, though, suggests that people's acceptance of their "particular situation" in

"the present enslaved world" is not a mistake, but a loss of meaning. Capitalism shapes human beings: it may "make us so stupid," but it makes us, nevertheless. Marx is caught in a bind. People who are well and truly alienated will not respond to his call to shape a more human world. They will deny that the world can be human, for that is what it means to be alienated.

To have the effect Marx hoped for, his theory would have to find an audience which believed in the continuing force of unmet human needs, which took the answering of these needs as an imperative, and which refused to accept spiritual solutions as real satisfaction. He would have to reach people who could balance the pressing demands of the present capitalist system with their allegiance to an absent but humanly necessary order. Marx's theory requires adherents who can mount a revolution (because they must), then strive together to accomplish tasks about the necessity of which they maintain a sense of humor, in a spirit of indeterminate belief. To become fully human, he must rely on people who can be more human that their society permits.

Perhaps--just perhaps--we could fulfill Marx's project if we knew our situation was exile. Perhaps if we longed to return, we could. But no one in Marx's society lived

life every day as a story of exile and return. Marx himself did not. He only wrote as if he did.

C O N C L U S I O N

POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN EXILE

> Then it will transpire that the world has long been dreaming of something that it can acquire if only it becomes conscious of it. It will transpire that it is not a matter of having a great dividing line between past and future, but of carrying out the thoughts of the past. And finally, it will transpire that mankind begins no new work, but consciously accomplishes its old work.
>
> --Karl Marx[1]

At the beginning of this essay, we set out to explore the relation between Marx's Jewishness and the structures of his political theory. Marx's philosophy of writing, with its invitation to find meaning in the gaps of his written work, gave us our provisional charter. We asked, "What Jewish patterns of thought reappear to us in the movement of Marx's theory? How would Marx make more sense--or a different, more interesting sense--if we read him as a writer in the Jewish tradition?"

Now, we can summarize what we have found.

Reading through and beyond what Marx actually wrote, we discover that Jewish patterns of thought do offer an intriguing perspective on Marx's project. Biblical ontology, for instance, helps bring out the distinctive features of Marx's sense of the real, which we find not so much in his political and economic doctrines as in his presumptions about the world, the thinker, and the

relation between them. Like the Torah, Marx does not conceive of reality as that which merely is. Nor does he locate human excellence in seeing reality as it is, in its essence. Instead, he outlines a theory in which human beings help to constitute the world through their actions. Moreover, in Marx's theory, people act to appropriate the world out of a sense of need which previous human actions have helped create and which will continue to evolve throughout history. This dialectic of needs insures that reality (human, social reality) will continue to change, too. Therefore, no thinker can stand outside the currents of history and declare the truth, once and for all. In order to interpret the world, the philosopher must contribute to changing it.

Marx thus consciously distances himself from his perception of the classical Greek thinkers, and of most modern theorists as well. By the same token, but without the same degree of awareness, he approaches the standpoint of the Jewish tradition. True, his ontology removes God from the universe, repositioning all needs and all powers within species homo sapiens, as the Torah does not. But an important effect of his doing so is to free human beings from the "God's-eye viewpoint" which looks past material oppression to find purely spiritual solutions. In his stress on the indispensability of action, Marx

echoes the Jewish motifs of partnership in Creation and dialogue. He takes the imperatives of the Jewish situation as they resound in Torah and transposes them into those of the species.

This insistent introduction of Jewish themes appears to us again when we examine closely how Marx treats Hegel. No simple inversion model explains what Marx does to the Hegelian dialectic. He challenges, corrects, and revises it at all the key points where it departs from the Jewish understanding of reality. It is just as if Marx were holding Hegel responsible for addressing Jewish concerns, a responsibility he never explicitly takes on himself.

Studying the rabbinical mode of textual interpretation called midrash, though, we can form a better idea of what Marx is doing here. Like a midrashist, Marx reading Hegel excerpts particular passages and points on which to comment. He tries to make the earlier writer speak to his current preoccupations (his "value-concepts," as Kadushin would say). Marx interprets as if his text must necessarily have meaning for him and his particular questions. The rabbis, who assumed the divinity of their text, did the same. Furthermore, we see Marx at work breathing new life into Hegel through his reinterpretation, making Hegel's texts a necessary corridor to reach his own. As Lenin wrote in 1914:

> It is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital, and especially its first chapters, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx.[2]

Indeed, understanding Marx must have been a nightmare for his colleagues and contemporaries. Our findings suggest that to appreciate what Marx was doing, Marx's readers would have to employ Hegelian dialectics, biblical ontology, and midrashic ingenuity, all at once. Compared to the classics of Western thought, all Marx's writings (and not just the Grundrisse, as Martin Nicolaus claims) are "altogether unique and in every sense strange product[s] of the intellect, and must have appeared like reflections of some man from a distant planet."[3] Yet Marx labored over these writings, and he clearly meant them to be read. Hence, we confront the paradox of a man striving energetically to communicate with an audience that is nowhere at hand.

Once more, it is the Jewish tradition which hints at the possibility of such an estrangement. The theme of exile portrays the breakdown of meaning between self, situation, and other that recurrently plagues a group of people which is partially constituted by a compelling purpose. When changes in the world they inhabit make the tasks belonging to such a group impossible to fulfill, its members suffer. They are injured in their identity, in

their claim to social resources that they need, and in their ability to participate in everyday social life freely and as whole selves. Most poignantly, though, the notion of exile implies that members of such a group will find themselves dispossessed of the language they need in order to formulate and communicate their predicament. They are psychically isolated, as well as socially disempowered.

The theme of exile immediately alerts us to some important aspects of Marx's theory of alienation, aspects not often discussed. Alienation means more than the brute exploitation of the workers, and certainly more than dissatisfaction with one's work. Alienation is a disaster to the self and the species because, according to Marx, part of what makes us human is being caught up in a web of intrinsic relations to the world and to each other. Because of alienation, the strands of this web are severed.

Alienation is not the opposite of possession, therefore; nor of power, at least in its sense as "domination." Rather, alienation is the opposite of dialogue. It derails the dialectic of human need so that we mistakenly pursue what will injure us, so that we choose death instead of life. The model of exile illuminates these most tragic traits of alienation. The model of return suggests that revolution, Marx's remedy for alienation, works to restore the unimpeded exchange between human

beings and their needs: not an end to history, but a renewal.

In capitalist society, all human beings are in exile, but the working class suffers it most. As a group, though, they do have the power to rise up and alter their condition. Karl Marx, too, seems to suffer exile as his personal fate, yet up until now he has apparently been powerless to achieve the conditions of his repatriation.

We have found that reading Marx through the prism of the Jewish tradition makes us aware of certain underlying dynamics in his work, patterns and problems which crop up again and again. Marx alludes to this texturing of his thought, but he never reflects on it: that is left for us, his readers. Consider, though, what kind of reader he needs. First, Marx requires us to be familiar with the Western tradition of political thought. His theory could not exist without the writings of the philosophical canon: he constructs his whole project of research and exposition in reference to them.

Much of what Marx has to day, however, he conveys by how he <u>diverges</u> from previous writers, explicitly or implicitly. To understand Marx, it is not enough to read his statements about this topic or that. It is not even enough to compare them side by side with the propositions that other thinkers have put forth. We have to measure

the specific difference which determines what Marx means to us not by what he says, but what he does: the transformations he performs on the text he reads.

The reader Marx requires, then, must be able to imagine theory as theorizing, as a kind of activity or practice. S/he must also be motivated to ask questions about Marx's practice in the belief that the answers will teach us all something significant: that is, something which bears more than an arbitrary connection to what Marx wrote and which addresses the present needs and difficulties of those who are now reading him.

Besides a grounding in Western philosophy and an interest in the practice of doing theory, Marx's reader would also do well to know something about Jewish thought. It is not impossible that one could trace the trajectory of Marx's revision of Hegel, for instance, and work it backward until one came up with approximately the structures of Jewish thought we used to interpret Marx with--but is it believable? Generally, we do not think to ask how philosophers depart from the Greco-Christian tradition in political thought, because they do not. Our task instead is to locate them within the flows and eddies of that tradition.

If a reader were familiar with Jewish thinking, though, as well as Western philosophy, and were accustomed to

responding in both modes to what s/he reads, s/he might notice something strange going on when s/he read Marx. S/he might sense attitudes and argumentative moves that seemed familiar from another place. S/he might even begin to wonder about Marx and his personal Jewish question.

But we have done this kind of noticing and wondering ourselves: at the very beginning of this essay, when we explored Marx's declaration, "I am no Marxist." The playful explanation at which we arrived--that Marx's theory is left unfinished, and we have the duty to develop it--we can now recognize as a kind of midrash. All through the body of this work, we have been elaborating on that bit of interpretation. We used our initial conception of how Marx writes to make sense of his key theoretical demarches against the Greeks, Bauer, and Hegel. We laid out his ontology to deepen our understanding of the direction he is taking. More than the doctrines he enunciates, we wrestled with the problems he tackles, central among them the struggle to make what is important to him important to his readers.

In short, we have done what we argued Marx requires his readers to do: a midrash on the interference between the Greco-Christian political tradition which Marx addresses and the Jewish tradition which helps construct his message. We established the context which gives the Jewish question

about Marx its meaning. In the process, we began to return Marx from exile.

If exile is the name of the social condition which separates Marx from his potential audience, what are the social forces which sustain it? Why is it difficult for us to read Marx as we conclude he needs to be read? It would be presumptuous to try to answer the question fully, here: that calls for an investigation all its own. There are two factors, though, that any answer would have to take into account.

The first is the persistence of antisemitism in modern political thought: not virulent Jew-hatred, but the genteel and generally quite unconscious assumption that nothing about Jews or Jewishness matters. We saw this assumption at work in mainstream interpretations of "On the Jewish Question," and we saw there how it obscured Marx's point. When Marx wrote, of course, this assumption was quite explicit and only barely detached from its theological moorings. Furthermore, Marx shared many of the anti-Jewish and antisemitic prejudices of his day. In order to develop his critique of "Christian" politics, he had to invent an "everyday Judaism" from which religion was methodologically excluded, and then proceed by negation. It follows that

Marx himself could not read, would not be capable of reading his own work in the way we have.

But even in recent times most commentators have not been prepared to ask the Jewish question about Marx. Possibly, this inability reflects the residual influences of Sunday-school lessons that God broke off with the Jews to collect a new Israel through the Christian church. Possibly, though, the theorists' neglect represents their democratic, and not their Christian, faith. As Jean Paul Sartre writes:

> The democrat, like the scientist, fails to use the particular case; to him [sic] the individual is only an ensemble of universal traits. It follows that his defense of the Jew saves the latter as man [sic] and annihilates him as Jew...His defense is to persuade individuals that they exist in an isolated state. "There are no Jews," he says, "there is no Jewish question." This means that he wants to separate the Jew from his religion, from his family, from his ethnic community, in order to plunge him into the democratic crucible whence he will emerge naked and alone, an individual and solitary particle like all the other particles.[4]

Sartre's shrewd observation leads on to the second reason we find it difficult to do midrash on Marx's Jewishness: the definitions of self, knowledge, and freedom which have marked off the modern age and which have set their imprint on liberal notions of democracy. Before modern times, as Charles Taylor points out, to be in touch with one's true self, one sought to find one's place in a meaningful cosmic order using one's God-given powers of reason. The intellectuals of the 17th century Enlightenment more or less reversed this conception. They put forth

the idea that being in touch with one's self meant pulling back from the world, refusing to search outside oneself for meaning, and observing the physical and social universe in a detached, objective way in order to gain mastery over both.[5]

This deliberate setting of boundaries between the self and the outside world ushered in what we have come to know as the modern age. Certainly, not everyone has completely accepted what Taylor calls "the self-defining subject," even in theory, but no one today can entirely escape its influence: it is our tacit understanding of what it means to be a person. Thinking of ourselves this way, though, prevents us from understanding any theory which finds a meaning to human life anywhere but in the arbitrary impulses of the individual. We have committed ourselves as moderns to the idea that there is not and cannot ever be a meaning which human beings did not wholly create.

The modern view of the person as a self-defining subject insures that when we do run into purposes larger than ourselves, we are most likely to regard them as threats to our freedom. Freedom, in the modern world, consists first and foremost of the rejection of anything vaguely resembling a meaningful order which could impose claims on us. This defensive stance, moreover, sets certain unspoken limits on what can count as knowledge in

modernity. Knowledge is of the world, by the knower. It is universally applicable and communicable to all. If the knower's own situation becomes a part of how s/he knows, then in modernity we regard that knowledge as somehow tainted, biased, irrational.

Against this background, how to do a midrashic reading of Marx? To interpret Marx as we have done is to place him within a context of meaning which goes on beyond the individual: not a cosmic order, but an intersubjective structure resembling it closely enough to set off alarm bells in the modern mind. If Marx makes sense best in light of a certain tradition, then by modern standards he is not free, and how shall we learn about freedom? Furthermore, on our account, Marx calls us to pay attention to human need, a product of our evolving sense of what it is to be human. Surely, this call infringes on the right of every subject to define his or her needs autonomously.

On top of all this, our midrash blends Marx's situation with his theory and our own with our understanding of it. Unless we are familiar with Jewish thought and <u>not</u> troubled by the question of what it is to do theory, chances are we would never arrive at a reading like this one. Does that not show we are reading into Marx what we want to hear, projecting what we want to see? How can we call the outcome of such an inquiry "knowledge"?

If we can do so, I submit, the reason is that modernity is beginning to lose its grip on our senses of reality. Possibly it had never fully triumphed; possibly the modern notions of self, freedom, and knowledge had always served as disciplinary ideas, never fully achieved in practice. In any event, two movements, one theoretical and one primarily social, have eroded them in the twentieth century. The first is the deconstruction of the subject. When Freud traced our patterns of thought and behavior back to their origins in early childhood, and when Nietzsche analyzed the irrational basis of our values and the covert influence of the will to power on our senses of the real, they raised doubts from which the modern self has never recovered.

The women's movement, meanwhile, has heightened our awareness of difference, making it clear that being a particular person is not less than being a self-defining subject, but more. The strain of feminism known as "identity politics" has sought within each person's reference as a White woman, a Black woman, a Jewish woman, a Christian woman, to find authentic ways of understanding the world and acting in it.[6]

Many contemporary students of politics remain committed to modernity. They take notice of the fading of the modern subject only to deplore it. Those who find

these developments encouraging, however, must now revive the question asked by another interpreter of Marx: "What is to be done?" In the late part of the twentieth century, that query resolves itself into the Jewish question of our times. In Marx's Germany, the Jewish question concerned a people unfitted to be free, whose existence helped give rise to a new theory of emancipation. Today, it means, "How may we all become free, excluding none of us? How may we liberate our whole selves, ceasing to reject the parts of our humanity which are neither rational, autonomous, polite, orderly, or eternal?"

In the first place, as political theorists, we can become better readers. The midrashic mode we have used with Marx fits his writings well, but we cannot transpose it into Mill, or Arendt, or de Beauvoir, and expect the same results. That does not mean, though, that we have to go back to asking solely after the intentions of the author, or constructing and deconstructing texts in a vacuum. With each thinker, we can ask if he or she is somehow in exile, how that condition is maintained, and to what promised land he or she is trying to return.

This way of talking about exile expands its meaning somewhat. It includes groups which face a common situation that restricts their development of their human powers, whether or not they are constituted by a task

which exile frustrates. We can recognize such groups by the conditions of their social being that impose conditions on their discourse. When we read a theorist who reflects the situation of being a Jew, a woman, etc., we can re-read their theory as a response to that situation and see how that affects our understanding of what they have said. Just as important, though: we can ask how the effect of their theoretical moves is to allow them, as a Jew or a woman, to enter politics as more nearly whole persons, and we can seek successful strategies to repeat.

Not just how we read but whom we read can make a difference. When we went searching for a Jewish conception of reality, we did not find it in philosophy but in Torah. In order to understand what oppresses and what liberates, we will need to explore fiction, drama, and poetry, listen to songs and street conversations. We will have to pay attention to the self-understandings of people who do not often speak for themselves in academic circles: working-class people, Jews, Blacks, women, gay men and lesbians, and an immense cast of characters classroom teaching of theory usually leaves waiting in the wings. We need not abandon the classics, only recognize that, however brilliant, this handful of men represents only a fraction of the experience of being human. The logic of other lives may be as different from theorists' notions of

subjectivity as midrash is from internal critique. We can put our theoretical skills to use to understand these logics instead of to disqualify them.

What all this suggests and what, ultimately, we can learn from Marx, is that political theory, in order to help us all become free, should move in the direction of dialogue. Theorists know how to speak; we must learn how to listen. We can write for each other, but the real challenge is to make our ideas accessible to others who do not share our experience in reading theory. Anyone can tell people how the world is, and anyone else can disagree, but our real challenge lies in exploring our various worlds together. To coin a phrase, theory is too important to be only for theorists. It must give way as a professional activity to make room for theorizing as a social practice, the property of all.

Of course, as Marx would never let us forget, no amount of "shoulds" and "musts" can change the reality of our working conditions as academics. If we seek to create dialogue in the larger polity, we will need to change the material conditions we immediately face. Few of us, no matter how dedicated, would lose their livelihoods for political ends, too few to make a difference. How to change the academy in order to be able to interpret the world: that is one humble place for dialogue to begin.

Let us return to the words of Charles Reznikoff one last time:

> How difficult for me is Hebrew.
> Even the words for mother, for bread, for sun
> Are foreign. How far have I been exiled, Zion.

When we take up those difficult words, when we speak of families and peoples, nourishment and survival, power and joy in one breath, our political discourse will begin to return us from exile.

FINIS

N O T E S

INTRODUCTION

1. David McLellan, Karl Marx, His Life and Thought (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 443.

2. Karl Schurz, cited in ibid., p. 453.

3. Marx to Lassalle (1842) and Marx to Leske, cited in ibid., p. 304.

4. Paul Ricoeur has defined hermeneutics as "the theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts" (Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences, ed. John B. Thompson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). For a fuller exploration of the hermeneutic circle, see Hans Georg Gadamer, Philosophical Hermeneutics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

5. See J.L. Austin, How to Do Things with Words, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

6. Louis Dupre, Marx's Social Critique of Culture (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 13. As the last phrase of the quotation implies, however, he maintains a sharper distinction between hermeneutic and critique than the one I rely on (e.g., p. 50).

7. Sometimes, not even what he teaches us explicitly. See chapter 4, infra.

8. The notion of "essentially contested concepts" comes from W.B. Gallie's essay of the same name in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, volume 56 (London, 1955-56). For a discussion of essentially contested concepts in political theory, see William E. Connolly, The Terms of Political Discourse, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), chapter 2.

9. Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in The Marx-Engels Reader, Robert C. Tucker, ed., 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), p. 143.

10. Saul K. Padover, Karl Marx: An Intimate Biography (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978), p. 17.

11. Ibid., p. 169.

12. McLellan, p. 2.

13. Ibid., p. 86.

14. Ibid., p. 6. It is characteristic of the literature that it presumes Marx's relations to Judaism must either be dissolved in the mainstream of the Western tradition or else conceived as a reduction of theory to religion. The poverty of these alternatives pleads the case for a third approach.

15. Shlomo Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 4.

16. Ibid.

17. I am skipping over the treatment by Istvan Meszaros in Marx's Theory of Alienation (London: Merlin Press, 1970), because it crudely intermingles Jewish and Christian patterns of thought and throws about biblical quotations without ever considering how they are most fruitfully to be read. This textual carelessness stands in sharp constrast to the author's exacting reading of Marx.

18. Julius Carlebach, Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 320. But cf. pp. 310-11.

19. Susan Handelman, The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), p. xv.

20. Bertell Ollman, Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 3.

21. Jerrold Seigel, Marx's Fate: The Shape of a Life (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 3.

CHAPTER 1

1. McLellan, p. 80. Liberalism, of course, is a particularly porous tradition, and to speak of "liberal politics" or "the liberal notion of freedom" is to employ

a kind of philosophical shorthand. According to Marx's analysis in his early writings, modern politics is marked by the centrifugal separation of the state and civil society. Liberalism aims at achieving the minimun of coercion by the state but ignores other real constraints. Freedom understood as formal, political freedom is a liberal ideal.

2. Dupre, p. 25.

3. Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in Tucker, p. 27.

4. Ibid., p. 48. Interestingly, in light of our discussion of the Jewish question in chapter 1, the word Fahigkeit which translates here as "capacity" can also imply "fittingness," as in Salonsfahig, "fit for the salon," i.e., polite society.

5. Ibid., p. 49.

6. Ibid., p. 48.

7. Ibid., p. 50.

8. Ibid., pp. 49-50. These are only the particular indictments of Judaism most integral to Marx's argument. The essay also contains offhand accusations such as that Judaism exudes "contempt for theory, for art, for history, and for man as an end in himself" (ibid., p. 51).

9. McLellan, p. 86.

10. Carlebach, pp. 310-11.

11. See the genealogical table in McLellan, p. 466.

12. Ibid., p. 7. The reference seems all the more pointed since it echoes the traditional formula of Jewish prayer, "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

13. Seigel, pp. 42-43.

14. Carlebach, p. 32.

15. McLellan, p. 5.

16. Padover, p. 48.

17. Seigel, p. 47.

18. McLellan, pp. 9-10; Padover, p. 33.

19. Dupre, p. 67; Padover, pp. 76-77. The Wissenschaft movement aimed at re-founding Jewish identity on the basis of the scientifc study of Jewish history, rather than faith.

20. McLellan, p. 53.

21. Padover, p. 48.

22. Seigel, p. 89.

23. Ibid. Eleanor's story is told (somewhat romantically) in Ronald Florence, Marx's Daughters (New York: Dial Press, 1975). From the same source (p. 18), we gather the only "Jewish joke" Marx is known to have told. Referring to the Franco-Prussian War, Marx comments to Engels:

> Both nations remind me of the anecdote of the two Russian noblemen accompanied by two Jews, their serfs. Nobleman A strikes the Jew of Nobleman B, and B answers: "Schlagst du meinen Jud, schlag ich deinen Jud." So both nations seem reconciled to their despots by being allowed, each of them, to strike at the despot of the other nation.

24. "On the Jewish Question," p. 26.

25. Cited in ibd., p. 29. (For a full translation of Bauer's article, see Philosophical Forum, vv. 2-4 (1978), pp. 135-49.

26. "On the Jewish Question," p. 31.

27. Ibid., p. 33.

28. McLellan, p. 73.

29. "On the Jewish Question," p. 30.

30. Ibid., p. 40.

31. Ibid., p. 46.

32. Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in Tucker, p. 21.

33. Ibid., pp. 32-33.

34. "On the Jewish Question," p. 46.

35. For a fuller discussion of Marx's theory of human needs, see chapter 3 infra.

36. "On the Jewish Question," p. 45.

37. Ibid., p. 43.

38. Ibid., p. 46.

39. Joel Schwartz actually does note this contrast, but by treating "Judaism" as synonymous with "Sabbath Judaism," he misses the point. See "Liberalism and the Jewish Connection," Political Theory, Feb. 1985.

40. Ibid., p. 36.

41. Ibid., p. 38.

42. Ibid., p. 51. Perhaps this explains the comment of Marx's Cologne acquaintance Georg Jung, "For Marx, at any rate, the Christian religion is one of the most immoral there is" (McLellan, p. 42).

43. "On the Jewish Question," p. 48. (For a thorough examination of Marx's views on "Sabbath Judaism," see Joel Schwartz, op. cit.)

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid., p. 50.

46. Ibid., p. 51.

47. Ibid., p. 52.

48. Ibid., p. 47.

49. McLellan, p. 457. Against this reading, some might point to the language of the first of the "Theses on Feuerbach," where Marx charges that Feuerbach "regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and fixed only in its dirty-judaical manifestation" (Tucker, p. 143). I think this reference actually supports my interpretation. Marx is reproaching Feuerbach for regarding all practical activity as alienating--as, in "Jewish" civil society, it is.

"Hence he does not grasp the significance of 'revolutionary,' of practical-critical, activity" (ibid.).

Marx's point here is that Feuerbach holds a prejudice against practice which parallels the prejudice against Jews. In both cases, he counsels, one must look objectively to the contradictions embodied in each to see them as signs of a potentially progressive future. This escapes Feuerbach, whose "materialism" degenerates into a blind faith in the empirically present.

50. I am not concerned here with the vexed question of how symbols function generally, but rather with how they work in Marx's thinking. The theme "Judaism" seems to form a link in a chain that binds human needs with civil society and both with a practical and realistic refusal of the claims of the political state. Moreover, I argue, these elements are related internally, so that Marx moves from one to the next effortlessly, by process of association. To use the terminology of literary theory, symbols in Marx's thought function as metonymies rather than as metaphors. See Handelman, pp. 54-55.

51. Seigel, pp. 117-18.

52. See Jacob R. Marcus, The Jew in the Medieval World: A Source Book (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1938), pp. 41-42, 145, and Judaism on Trial, Hyam Maccoby, ed. (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982).

53. Carlebach, pp. 12-17.

54. Hans Liebeschutz, "German Radicalism and the Formation of Jewish Political Attitudes during the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century," in Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 145.

55. Carlebach, pp. 23-24.

56. Liebeschutz, p. 142.

57. Jacob Katz, "The Term 'Jewish Emancipation': Its Origins and Historical Impact," in Altmann, pp. 9-10.

58. Ibid., p. 21.

59. Jews tended to respond by challenging the credentials of Christian Europe to pass judgment on questions of freedom. Heinrich Heine, Marx's contemporary, asked rhetorically, "What is the great assignation of our times? It is the emancipation, not only of the people of Ireland, of the Greeks, the Jews of Frankfurt, the blacks of West India and similar depressed peoples, but of the whole world, especially Europe" (ibid.). Ludwig Borne, a slightly older reformer, added, "Seen from the European point of view, Germany as a whole was a ghetto" (Liebeschutz, p. 14).

60. Leon Poliakov, "Anti-Semitism and Christian Teaching," Midstream 12, March 1966, p. 13. Cited in John Murray Cuddihy, The Ordeal of Civility (New York: Basic Books, 1974), p. ix.

61. Cuddihy, p. 4.

62. Ibid., p. 14.

63. Ibid., p. 68. Halakhah actually translates better as "way of going," although it can also include "law." See pp. 125-131, infra.

64. See Schwartz, p. 82, note 64. See also chapter 4 below.

65. Carlebach, pp. 10-11.

66. Ibid., p. 372.

67. See note 46.

68. Seigel, pp. 144-45.

69. See note 42.

70. Seigel notes this tendency in the contrasting analyses of the 1848 revolution Marx gives in The Class Struggle in France and The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (pp. 199-203).

CHAPTER 2

1. Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," in Writing and

Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 118. The novelist he refers to is James Joyce.

2. Ibid., p. 82.

3. In this light, speaking of Marx's ontology (as I do in the title of chapter 3) can only mean posing the question of how the way Marx understands reality is or is not like what Western thought refers to as ontology, without prejudging.

4. Robert Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative (New York: Basic Books, 1981), p. 32n.

5. Karl Marx, "Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in Karl Marx: Early Writings, trans. T.B. Bottomore (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), p. 52.

6. The Babylonian Talmud is a written record of the oral tradition of commentary on the bible that had developed by the year 200 CE. It also includes later rabbinic glosses. See chapter 4 infra.

7. Cited in Thorlief Boman, Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1960), pp. 143-44.

8. Matthew Arnold, Culture and Anarchy (New York: MacMillan, 1896), p. 109, cited in Handelman, p. 179.

9. Johannes Pedersen, Israel: Its Life and Culture, trans. Mrs. Aslaug Moller (London: Oxford University Press, 1926-47).

10. Boman, p. 23.

11. Boman's reading will of course outrage the sensibilities of anyone accustomed to thinking of Plato and Aristotle as polar opposites. It depends on one's perspective, though; from Jerusalem, the distance between Athens and Scythia may look very small. See pp. 54-56 and note 55 below.

12. Boman, p. 189.

13. Ibid., p. 27.

14. Ibid., p. 54.

15. Ibid., pp. 119-21.

16. Ibid., p. 86.

17. Ibid., pp. 128, 184.

18. Aristotle, Ethica Nicomathea, 1177a-1179a. See also Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

19. Boman, p. 31.

20. Ibid., pp. 33-34.

21. Ibid., p. 31.

22. Ibid., p. 33.

23. Ibid., p. 38.

24. Ibid., p. 150.

25. Ibid., p. 146.

26. Ibid., p. 137.

27. Ibid., pp. 126-27.

28. Ibid., p. 137.

29. Ibid., p. 140.

30. Ibid., p. 148.

31. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), p. 44.

32. Boman, p. 149.

33. Ibid., p. 171. Note that eschatology does not imply a telos since we can still argue with God over our final ends. Also, readers familiar with Martin Heidegger's Being and Time will note some similarity between his view of time and history and the biblical view I have been presenting. Cf. Michael Wyschogrod, The Body of Faith (New York: Seabury Press, 1983).

34. Boman, pp. 156-57.

35. Ibid., p. 159.

36. Ibid., p. 160.

37. Ibid., p. 185.

38. Ibid., p. 117.

39. Ibid., p. 91.

40. Goethe, Faust, cited ibid., p. 191n.

41. Ibid., p. 56.

42. Ibid.

43. James Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language (Glasgow: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 21.

44. Ibid., p. 75.

45. Ibid., p. 69.

46. Ibid., p. 40.

47. Ibid., pp. 25-26.

48. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

49. Ibid., p. 23.

50. Ibid., pp. 13-14. I have picked out and summarized those of Barr's criticisms I think one must evaluate before adopting a Hebrew-Greek distinction.

51. See note 35. One apparent exception is Boman's treatment of the Greek and Hebrew words for word. He calls the term a "point of intersection" between the two modes and reads "the Word" of the Gospel of John as effecting "a beautiful and mysterious unity" of Greek and Hebrew (pp. 68-69). Yet even here, Boman stresses that the resemblance is purely formal: "These two terms teach us what the two peoples considered primary and essential in mental life."

52. Lewis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass, in The Annotated Alice, Martin Gardner, ed. (New York: Bramhall House, 1960), p. 207.

53. But see Humpty Dumpty's explanation, ibid., pp. 268-70.

54. Handelman, p. 37.

55. Greek thought, too, becomes richer for us when we study its texts with care. In The Fragility of Goodness (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Martha Nussbaum demonstrates the influence of the tragic theater in the writings of Greek philosophers. Greek thought, in her view, is fundamentally about tragic choices and the real power of events over our ability to lead praiseworthy lives. Plato, she argues, tries to eliminate the power of luck; Aristotle and the tragedians aim to teach it how to yield to it nobly. Nussbaum's reading is compelling precisely because it reveals a dimension of Greek thought we rarely encounter today in those who claim to inherit its lessons. We hardly find Jewish thought discussed at all in political science, though, and so that is the area on which I concentrate.

56. Barry W. Holtz, "On Reading Jewish Texts," in Back to the Sources, Barry W. Holtz, ed. (New York: Summit Books, 1984), p. 29.

57. To a remarkable degree, this holds true even for Jewish secularists, including those who base their identities on the history of the Jews as an outsider people. See Lawrence Bush, "The Bundist's Sabbath," Genesis 2, April/May 1986, pp. 16-19. Nevertheless, even though certain themes in the Torah are basic to Jewish culture, not all Jews accept them nor are aware of them, nor do these themes exhaust the resources of Jewish thought.

58. Joel Rosenberg, "Biblical Narrative," in Holtz, ed., p. 31.

59. Bruce Kawin, Telling it Again and Again, cited in Alter, p. 92.

60. It would be possible to investigate what view of reality the other genres represented in the Torah reflect, too, and to compare law with poetry, or narrative with prayer. For our purposes, the biblical story is a close enough approximation of the text.

61. Rosenberg, pp. 62-63.

62. Alter, p. 65.

63. Murray H. Lichtenstein, "Biblical Poetry," in Holtz, ed., pp. 120-21.

64. Alter, p. 182.

65. Martin Buber, The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism trans. Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 31.

66. Alter, p. 12.

67. Sifre Numbers 112, cited in Handelman, p. 70.

68. Boman, p. 49.

69. Aristotle, Ethica Nicomathea, 1155a-1157a, 1166a-b, 1169b-1170b.

70. Alter, pp. 126-27.

71. Buber, p. 94.

72. Rosenberg, p. 47.

CHAPTER 3

1. Charles Taylor, Hegel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 25.

2. Ibid., p. 26.

3. Marx applies this label to Hegel on the opening page of his doctoral dissertation, "The Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature," translated in Norman Livergood, Activity in Marx's Philosophy (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), pp. 61-109.

4. Taylor, p. 172.

5. Ibid., pp. 172-76, 377-78.

6. Cited in Seigel, p. 66.

7. Ibid., p. 67.

8. Livergood, pp. 71-72.

9. Ibid., p. 69.

10. Ibid., p. 70.

11. Karl to Heinrich Marx (1837), quoted in McLellan, p. 28.

12. Avineri, p. 18.

13. Seigel, p. 106.

14. Ibid., p. 134.

15. Ibid., p. 106.

16. Ibid., p. 134.

17. See ibid., pp. 175-76, and cf. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, in Tucker, pp. 493-96. In the Grundrisse, Marx writes on Greek art in a more detached tone, indicating a shift in symbology but not a change in theme.

18. It is not necessary to agree with Marx's critique of "Greece," nor to see it as exactly parallel to the version of Greek thought we sketched in ch. 2, in order to recognize the central part it plays in the evolution of his theory.

19. On Moses, see Carlebach, p. 317, and Bottomore, p. 45. On Joshua: Avineri, p. 43. On the Levites: Grundrisse, McLellan, p. 20. On Adam: Grundrisse, Nicolaus, p. 611. On Esau: ibid., p. 307. On Habakkuk: Tucker, p. 596. On Ezekiel: ibid., p. 614. The list is not comprehensive.

20. "Old Testament" is a derogatory title given to the Hebrew bible by the early Christians. "Testament" means "covenant," and the name Old Testament refers to the doctrine that God had abrogated the original covenant with the Jews and replaced them with the Christians. In this essay, we will use the term Torah instead.

21. Marx to Lassalle, cited in Nicolaus, pp. 59-60.

22. Ollman, p. 17.

23. This elasticity of meaning is what Ollman intends when he paraphrases Pareto, saying, "Marx's words are like bats: one can see in them both birds and mice: (p. 3). Marx can do this with his words, according to Ollman, because the different meanings of the same concept are

internally related. It is worth noting, too, that Marx's use of context to establish meaning resembles the biblical use of key-words we discussed in the previous chapter and some kinds of midrashic wordplay to be mentioned in chapter 4.

24. Ibid., p. 15.

25. 1844 Manuscripts, in Bottomore, p. 207.

26. Ollman, p. 89.

27. Ibid., p. 92.

28. Marx accuses Max Stirner, Jeremy Bentham, and the German "true socialists" of ideological thinking. See ibid., pp. xii-xiii, and also pp. 227-232.

29. Cited in ibid., p. 292n.

30. Ibid., pp. 82-83.

31. See Ollman's discussion of why Marx calls the alienated individual an "abstraction," pp. 134-35.

32. Carol Gould, Marx's Social Ontology: Individuality and Community in Marx's Theory of Social Reality (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978), p. xvi.

33. 1844 Manuscripts, in Bottomore, p. 159.

34. Karl Marx, Preface to the Critique of Political Economy, in Tucker, ed., pp. 4-5.

35. "To talk about the realization of a self here is to say that the adequate human life would not just be a fulfillment of an idea or a plan which is fixed independently of the subject who realizes it, as in the Aristotelian form of a man. Rather, this life must have the added dimension that the subject can recognize it as his sic own, as having unfolded from within him. This self-related dimension is entirely missing from the Aristotelian tradition." Taylor, p. 15. Marx adds that this life does not merely unfold: we create it through productive practice.

36. Ollman, pp. 114-19.

37. See William E. Connolly, Appearance and Reality in Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 173-74.

38. Taylor, pp. 557-58.

39. Karl Marx, Capital, volume III, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (New York: International Publishers, 1967), pp. 818-20.

40. See Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, trans. Walter Kaufman and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1967), p. 17.

41. Marx, "On the Jewish Question," p. 51.

42. Taylor, p. 557.

43. See note 16.

44. "Rabbi" is a Hebrew term meaning "my teacher." Rabbis are not clergy, in the Christian sense; they do not act as intercessors between their congregants and God, nor do they have to have a "calling" in order to serve (although good character is presumed). Rather, the rabbinic movement, beginning in the first century CE, based its claim to authority on scholarship--and in particular, on the ability to find new, powerful interpretations of the Torah which would help organize Jewish life and thought. For an account of the remarkable way the rabbinic movement transformed Judaism, see Jacob Neusner, Midrash in Context (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

CHAPTER 4

1. Karl Marx, Capital, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (New York: International Publishers, 1967), volume I, pp. 18-20 (afterword to the second German edition).

2. Avineri, p. 250.

3. Joan Cocks, "Hegel's Logic, Marx's Science, Rationalism's Perils," Political Studies (1983), XXXI, p. 592.

4. Taylor, p. 327. Stress added.

5. Robert Paul Wolff traces the ironic structure of Capital beautifully in "Moneybags Must Be So Lucky: Reflections on the Philosophical Significance of the Literary Structure of Marx's Capital," the Romanelli-Phi Beta Kappa Lectures for 1984-85, given at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, March 27, April 3, and April 10, 1985.

6. One example is Marx's imposition upon Hegel (in his critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right) of the rabbinic principle that the general reveals no truth beyond the particular. See Tucker, pp. 18-23.

7. See Midrash and Literature, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman and Sanford Budick (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Harold Bloom, Kabbalah and Criticism (New York: Seabury Press, 1975); and Jacques Derrida, "Edmond Jabes and the Question of the Book," in Writing and Difference.

8. See Arthur Waskow, Godwrestling (New York: Schocken Books, 1978).

9. Bereishit Rabbah 1:1.

10. Jerusalem Talmud Shekalim 13b (cited in Handelman, 37). See also Rashi's commentary on Deuteronomy 33:2.

11. Babylonian Talmud Avot 5:21 (cited in Handelman, 27).

12. Bereishit Rabbah 22:2, cited in Handelman, 51.

13. Women were "excused" from the study of Torah on the grounds that it might conflict with their household duties. Several women, notably Ima Shalom in the third century and the daughters of Rashi, the famous exegete of the thirteenth, became learned anyway. Today, even the most Orthodox recognize the scholarship of Nechama Leibowitz. Blu Greenberg, the author of On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1981), has predicted that we will see the first women Orthodox rabbis before the year 2000. This is a logical but much belated corollary of the attitude toward Torah described in this chapter.

14. Some of the early Church Fathers evidently took this approach for many of the same reasons. See Karlfried Froehlich, Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

15. "Just as the hammer splits the rock into many fragments, so may one verse be split into many meanings" (Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 34a).

16. Babylonian Talmud Avot 1:1.

17. See Jacob Neusner, Midrash in Context (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

18. Thus Christian authorities continuously attacked the Talmud as a tissue of lies and slanders and sometimes succeeded in banning it altogether, along with (in one case) the midrashic mode of sermonizing within the synagogue. See Yvonne Glickson, "Talmud, Burning of," Encyclopedia Judaica, xv, 768-71.

19. Joseph Dan, "Midrash and the Dawn of Kabbalah," in Hartman and Budick, p. 127.

20. Jerusalem Talmud Peah 17:1, cited in Yerushalmi, p. 112.

21. This section is based on Handelman, pp. 51-76. Aristotle's logic of categories continues to influence theorists of reading and writing: for a textbook example, see Charles Kay Smith, Styles and Structures (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1974), pp. 184-86.

22. Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 13b, cited in Handelman, p. 56.

23. See the remarkable story of how the rabbis ignored a divine intruder in Babylonian Talmud Baba Metzia 59a-b, cited in Handelman, pp. 40-41. See also Pesahim 119a.

24. Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 63a, cited in Handelman, p. 55.

25. Max Kadushin, The Rabbinic Mind, 2nd ed. (New York: Blaisdell Publishing Co., 1965).

26. Ibid., p. 78.

27. Ibid., p. 134.

28. Ibid., p. 133.

29. James Kugel, "Two Introductions to Midrash," Prooftexts 3 (1983), pp. 131-34.

30. Babylonian Talmud Pesahim 6b, cited in Handelman, p. 37.

31. Kadushin, p.

32. For a discussion of midrash as a literary form rather than an activity, see Addison G. Wright, "The Literary Genre Midrash," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 28 (1966), pp. 105-38, 417-57.

33. Handelman, pp. 137-40, 174-78, and see the other references in the index.

34. Marx, Capital, volume I, p. 19.

CHAPTER 5

1. See the discussion in Meszaros, pp. 217-27, and the list of references in Ollman, p. 304, note 1 on chapter 24.

2. See note 68 on chapter 1, supra.

3. E.g., Kenneth Keniston, Young Radicals (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968).

4. See G.A. Cohen, Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).

5. For example, see Erich Fromm's introduction to the 1844 manuscripts in Marx's Concept of Man (New York: 1963).

6. Alasdair C. MacIntyre, After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), p. 206.

7. Ibid., p. 210.

8. See our earlier discussion of hayah, p. 57 supra.

9. This is a paraphrase of the general strokes of Luria's doctrine. It can be found described in more

detail in Gershom G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (New York: Schocken Books, 1954), pp. 260-78.

10. Although the themes of dialogue, exile, and return are centuries old in Judaism, they have been rejuvenated in the 20th century, in very different ways, by Gershom Scholem and Martin Buber. Within Jewish circles, two schools of thought oppose this development. Certain Orthodox thinkers champion the continuing sufficiency of halakhah, setting questions of meaning on one side. Many less traditional religious Jews, on the other hand, do not take exile as a problem because of their faith in rationalism.

11. I do not include the Exodus story. Unlike Michael Walzer in Exodus and Revolution (New York: Basic Books, 1985), I do not believe the Torah offers us paradigms for revolution, only stories and inspiration. We must make our models to fit our times. Furthermore, if I were to adopt the story of the going out of Egypt as a recipe, I would still disagree with Walzer's anti-radical reading. In any case, slavery is not exile (although exile may be slavery). What we have to contend with in modern societies is far more difficult to recognize than overt oppression, and stories of exile will aid us to understand our plight.

12. Bereishit Rabbah 3:1.

13. Martin Buber, On the Bible, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1982), p. 18.

14. Waskow, pp. 47-48.

15. Harold Bloom, Agon: Toward a Theory of Revisionism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 321.

16. See Jacob Katz, Exclusiveness and Tolerance (New York: Schocken Books, 1961).

17. 1844 Manuscripts, in Bottomore, pp. 124-25.

18. Capital, v. 1, pp. 231-302.

19. 1844 Manuscripts, in Bottomore, pp. 121-29.

20. The idea that maintaining one's identity and worldview are interests of equal importance to the economic ones is expounded by Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shills (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1936).

21. Cited in Ollman, p. 304n.

22. Ibid., p. 156.

23. See Marx's discussion of the "fetishism of commodities" in Capital, v. 1, pp. 71-83.

24. See Ollman, pp. 174-86.

25. Seigel discusses the theme of the inverted world in Hegel and Marx, pp. 32-37.

26. See p. 100, supra.

CONCLUSION

1. Marx to Ruge (1843), in Tucker, p. 15.

2. Cited in Ollman, p. 35.

3. Grundrisse (Nicolaus), pp. 61-62.

4. Jean-Paul Sartre, Antisemite and Jew, trans. George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), pp. 56-57. I do not endorse Sartre's broader theory of antisemitism, however.

5. Taylor, pp. 3-11.

6. See Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," in This Bridge Called My Back, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, 2nd ed. (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1983), pp. 210-18, and Elly Bulkin, Barbara Smith, and Minnie Bruce Pratt, Yours in Struggle (New York: Long Haul Press, 1984).

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